# Commentary

Volume Fifty-Six, Number One, July 1973


# THE MASADA COMPLEX

Robert Alter

**Science versus Justice**
Lionel Abel

**Key West, With Cubans**
Joan Colebrook

**Encounter Groups and Other Panaceas**
Alan L. Mintz

**The Question of the Judenräte**
Maurice Friedberg

**Deep Tango**
William S. Pechter

**The Body Politic—A Story**
Steve Brynes

**Books in Review:**
Steven Kelman on Fellow Travellers
James Q. Wilson on A. Philip Randolph
John Hollander on Saul Steinberg
Myron Rush/Edward Graham/Jane Larkin Crain

**An Exchange on IQ: R. J. Herrnstein & Critics**


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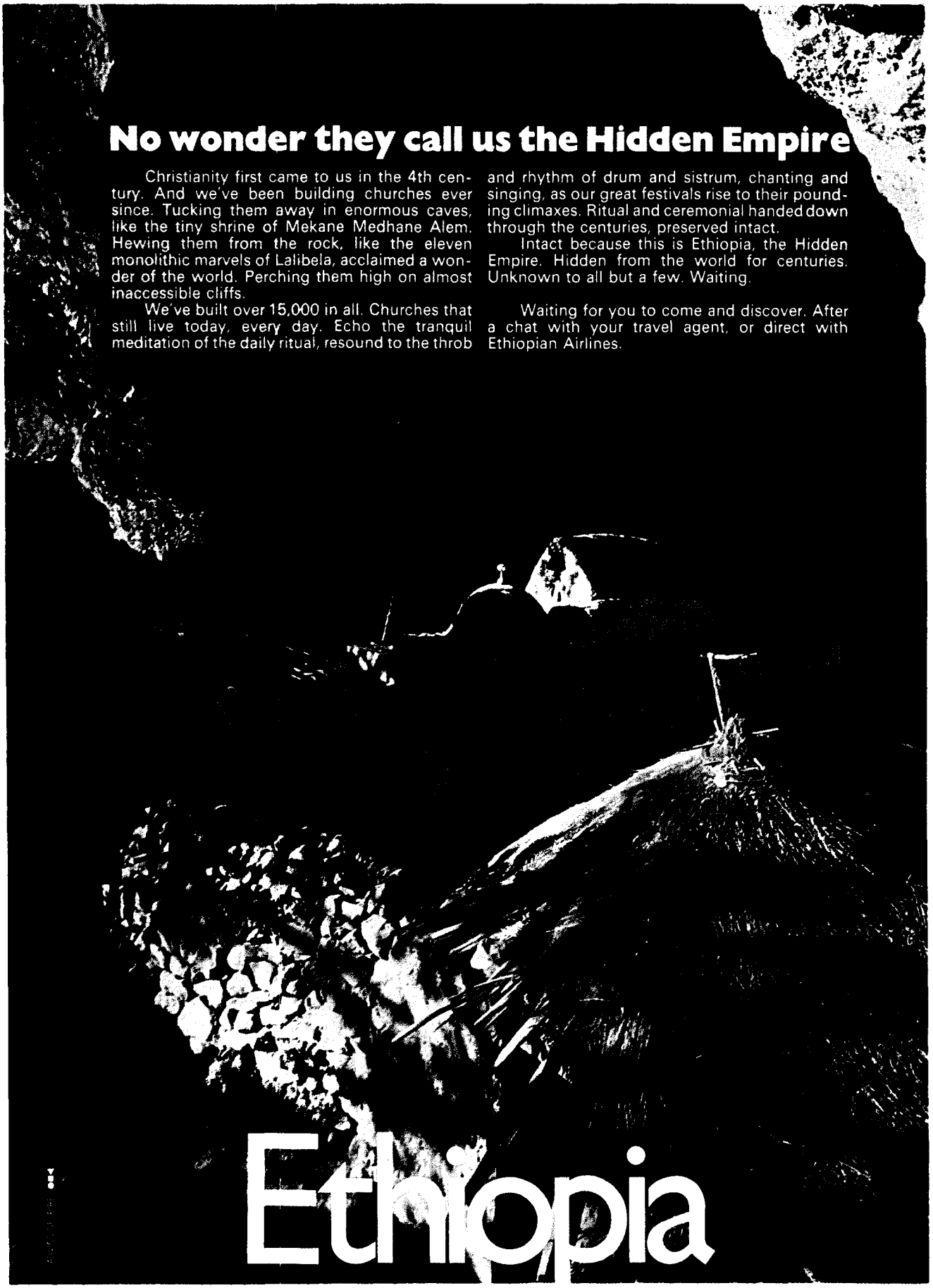
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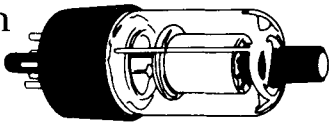

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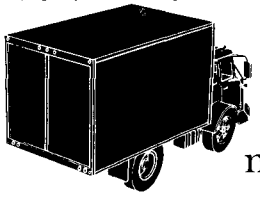

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# Commentary

VOLUME 56 NUMBER 1 *JULY 1973*

**Articles** 19 The Masada Complex *Robert Alter*
25 Science versus Justice *Lionel Abel*
42 Encounter Groups and Other Panaceas *Alan L. Mintz*
50 Key West, With Cubans *Joan Colebrook*

**Fiction** 33 The Body Politic *Steve Brynes*

**Observations** 61 The Question of the Judenräte *Maurice Friedberg*

**Movies** 64 Deep Tango *William S. Pechter*

**Letters** 4 from ~~*John Morrow*~~, ~~*David Z. Robinson*~~, ~~*David Landau*~~, ~~*Joel A. Zaslowsky*~~, ~~*Erwin Adler*~~, ~~*Milton F. Shore*~~, ~~*George Purvin*~~, ~~*Simon D. Messing*~~, ~~*R. J. Herrnstein*~~, ~~*Harry Cohen*~~, ~~*Chaim Raphael*~~, ~~*Nathan Barack*~~, ~~*Reuven Levinson*~~, ~~*Alfred B. Mason*~~, and others

**Books in Review** 67 The Fellow Travellers, by David Caute *Steven Kelman*
70 A Contemporary High Holiday Service, edited by Sidney Greenberg and S. Allan Sugarman; Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, edited by Jules Harlow *Edward Graham*
72 Looking Back, by Joyce Maynard *Jane Larkin Crain*
73 Honecker and the New Politics of Europe, by Heinz Lippmann *Myron Rush*
76 The Inspector, by Saul Steinberg *John Hollander*
78 A. Philip Randolph, by Jervis Anderson *James Q. Wilson*

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# Letters from Readers

## IQ, Lysenkoism & Liberal Orthodoxy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I wish to take issue with some of the comments made by R. J. Herrnstein ["On Challenging an Orthodoxy," April]. Although it is clear that Mr. Herrnstein was set upon by campus troglodytes on numerous occasions, and certainly was treated in a manner that casts doubt upon the sanity of campus radicals, it still appears that the scientific basis for his conclusions is extremely dubious.

Mr. Herrnstein assumes that a significant hereditary component in the variation in intelligence among human populations has been clearly and conclusively demonstrated, and anyone who disagrees with this conclusion is a woolly-headed misinformed liberal. He cites studies that go back to the turn of the century and then suggests that there is some relationship between Lysenkoism and academic egalitarianism. All of these conclusions are unwarranted.

No informed person today argues that genes do not determine intelligence, at least in a molecular sense, since certainly the nervous system consists of structures which are genetically determined in the final analysis. However, the crucial question is to what extent the variability in IQ scores in human populations is determined by genetic differences and to what extent it is determined by environmental factors. In fact, the only foolproof way to answer this question would be to obtain large numbers of individuals with identical heredity and raise them under dissimilar environmental regimes, or alternatively to raise in identical environments individuals with different hereditary constitutions. Obviously these sorts of experiments, which are frequently carried out with laboratory animals, cannot possibly be done with human beings, now or in the foreseeable future. All other studies, such as those carried out with identical and fraternal twins, are fraught with many difficulties which have been skillfully analyzed by Cavalli-Sforza, Lewontin, and numerous others.

To suggest at this time that we know that intelligence (in fact the variations in intelligence) is 20 or 30 or 60 per cent determined by heredity is simply uninformed or dishonest. Our society would be much healthier if we wasted less time arguing about angels on heads of pins whom we cannot count because we lack the technology to do so, and concentrated on improving the lot of those vast numbers of individuals who never have a chance in our society of expressing one-tenth of their genetic endowment.


JOHN MORROW
Department of Physiology
and Cell Biology
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas


TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

R. J. Herrnstein complains that his Harvard colleagues, while defending his freedom of speech, were not willing to agree publicly with his conclusions. Norman Podhoretz in the same issue ["The New Inquisitors"] says that there are some issues on university campuses on which it is impossible to speak freely. These "settled" issues include Richard Nixon, ecology, and women, as well as the inheritance of IQ. As a former academic administrator, I would like to comment on these complaints.

In my view, Mr. Herrnstein's article in the *Atlantic* overstated the importance of IQ, misunderstood the complexity of intelligence, and ignored the dynamics of privilege, discrimination, and marriage in our society. I have written elsewhere about my views, as have Harvard Professors David K. Cohen, Christopher Jencks, and Karl Deutsch. Those who oppose both Mr. Herrnstein's thesis and any harassment to which he was subjected (as well as the harassment of others) have no choice but to state their views. In fact, opposition to Mr. Herrnstein's article has probably been muted in order



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If you are reading this, *you* were not aborted. We assume that you expect to live out your own life without fear of being killed *by law*. But we fear that such expectations are now endangered.

We hope you agree with us that the United States Supreme Court has gone too far in its recent decision in the abortion cases. We believe that the same logic and arguments applied by the Court to abortion can also be applied to old people, or the handicapped — even to the merely unwanted, "unproductive" members of our society. (The Court said: "Maternity, or additional offspring, may force upon the woman a distressful life and future." As Columnist Wm. F. Buckley Jr. commented, "Woe unto those Americans who, because of their great age, threaten distressfulness upon their children"!)

We hope you agree that the time has come for *action:* we must take a stand *in defense of life — now,* before it is too late!

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That an unborn child has a right to be born.

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That abortion "up to seven months" means killing a child up to seven months after life has begun.

That the majority's standard for the protection of life opens the way to the destruction of the sick, the aged — even the merely unwanted citizen: we believe that defenseless human life is life *at any age,* and must enjoy the protection of our laws.

**We believe that we must begin now to "discover" the rights of the unborn and the defenseless just as, after the Dred Scott decision, we began to "discover" the rights of the black man. We ask all Americans of good will to join us in this declaration.**

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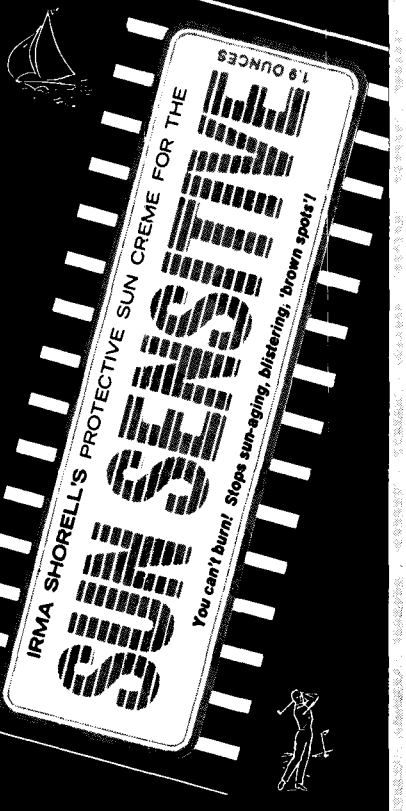
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to avoid condoning the harassment.

Mr. Herrnstein is naive when he states that his article had nothing to do with race. Although he later made his personal position clear, the article did not. The editors of the *Atlantic* must have also misread the article because their unusual and inflammatory introduction (never repudiated by Mr. Herrnstein) put the article in the category of the Moynihan report on the Negro family, and the Coleman report on racial isolation in the schools. It is hard to see why they would congratulate themselves on their courage in printing the article if they did not believe that it had something to do with race and IQ. In fact, I believe that if it were not for the subconscious public desire to find some way to justify racial discrimination, warmed-over articles with no new information, such as those by Jensen and Herrnstein, would get no public attention.

I can assure Mr. Podhoretz that the issues he seems concerned about—ecology, women, and President Nixon—are regularly discussed on college campuses. Many faculty, including some COMMENTARY writers, publicly came out for Nixon in 1972. I have seen no shortage of articles attacking the ecology movement or women's liberation. It is true and to be deplored that during the Vietnam war there was severe harassment of some pro-war speakers and faculty members with ties to the defense establishment. I, along with many other administrators, did my best to bring charges against those involved, and supplied police protection to those who wanted to be heard.

But I am surprised that Mr. Podhoretz does not mention anti-Semitism as one of the "settled" issues no longer under active campus discussion. Surely he knows that anti-Semitism was freely expressed on college campuses twenty-five years ago. There were open discussions as to whether Jewish professors would be accepted by Gentile students. It was understood that one famous mathematician would not recommend Jews for tenured positions because he felt they peaked in ability earlier than non-Jews, and thus were unfairly judged as having greater potential because of this "genetic" trait.

I am certain that if someone today were to write an article talking about research he wished to do to investigate the inferiority (or the early peaking) of Jews, he would be subject to severe criticism. I would join in the criticism, and still defend the right to do research, particularly if he were a serious scholar in the field, and published in scholarly journals. I must admit, however, that I consider the issue "settled"—and I am glad of it. I would hope that Mr. Podhoretz is also glad.

DAVID Z. ROBINSON
Carnegie Corporation of
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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I watched the Herrnstein controversy at Harvard unfold, first-hand, and as managing editor of the *Harvard Crimson* at the time I supervised the news coverage on R. J. Herrnstein in that paper.

First, I am appalled at the misrepresentations about the *Crimson* role hinted at in Mr. Herrnstein's article. He repeatedly refers to *Crimson* statements or "advertisements" of protests against him, implying that the *Crimson* played the part of a protesters' pamphlet: e.g., the *Crimson* "carried the news" that the protesters "had decided to conduct 'a fall offensive against' me." He states further that "the radicals enjoyed abundant press coverage throughout the autumn and winter" in, among other places, the *Crimson*.

One would not guess from what Mr. Herrnstein says that the *Crimson*'s first issue that fall, for example, discussing what had already become a controversy, concluded that Mr. Herrnstein's article "delivered a strong and healthy challenge to many commonly held notions about man's potential in society." Nor would one guess that "abundant press coverage" meant, from September 1971 to February 1, 1972 (when my *Crimson* term ended, and the controversy was more or less over), a grand total of seven news articles (that's how many I count)—not an enormous number for a college daily which regularly grinds out 35 or 40 news stories a week. Furthermore, that the only stories receiving major play were those devoted to the news of the faculty petition supporting Mr. Herrnstein. Far from being prejudiced against Mr. Herrnstein, our news policy on the subject was

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this: the protesters, we believed, were interested not in the merits of the particular issue, but simply in manufacturing any saleable issue and "building" their own organization. We therefore kept coverage to a minimum. Mr. Herrnstein may resent what was said in those few stories, but I can't answer him on that.

Truth to tell, the major focus of public attention in the Herrnstein affair was neither Mr. Herrnstein's original tract, nor the *Atlantic*'s splashy presentation of it, nor the protesters' behavior. It was the faculty petition supporting Mr. Herrnstein, a poorly drafted and grossly hysterical statement which in some ways confused the protesters' harassment with legitimate forms of objection to Mr. Herrnstein's ideas. ("The open-minded search for truth cannot proceed in an atmosphere of political intimidation," for example. Some faculty members were prepared to include the more vociferous anti-Herrnstein arguments in the "intimidation" category.) But neither Mr. Herrnstein nor Mr. Podhoretz would want to say that, because it would ruin their tidy thesis about how liberal academics were privately in league with the protest. If anything is objectionable about the COMMENTARY article, it is the sentiment that because the liberal faculty didn't support Mr. Herrnstein down the line, they were really against him; that by saying "We may or may not agree with Mr. Herrnstein's views, but we endorse his right to express them," the liberals played right into the protesters' hands. Mr. Herrnstein argues on this basis that "the radicals were acting out" the hidden liberal position, and Mr. Podhoretz finds that "The impression was thereby left that Herrnstein's actual views corresponded to the distortions and vilifications publicized by the radicals."

That just isn't true. I did not always follow the thinking of the liberal faculty, but it was plain to see that, far from attempting to ignore the reputed merits of the article, they were simply uniting on what was then the most urgent issue: Mr. Herrnstein's basic rights as a member of the university. By haggling about the article itself, obviously, they would have detracted from their central position. It isn't true either, as COMMENTARY implies, that Mr. Herrnstein built

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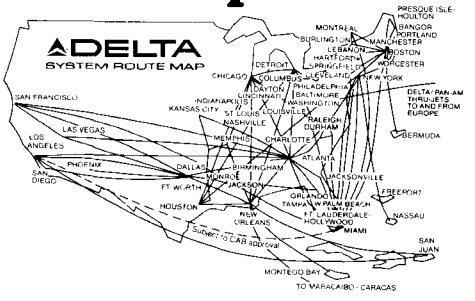

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an unimpeachable case for what he said. Anyone with a high-school education could see that much of his article was clearly suppositious. One may sympathize with Mr. Herrnstein's castigation of those who did not support him, because it is the understandable reaction of a man under heavy fire. But from Mr. Podhoretz's catbird seat in New York, the proposition "If you're not for him, you're against him" aspires to the level of doctrine, and as doctrine it isn't the purest form of logic I've ever seen.

DAVID LANDAU
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Rabbi Avtalyon taught: "Ye wise, take heed to your words lest ye incur guilt that deserves exile" (Avot 1:11). That is a wise, if perhaps overstated, admonition to the academic to recognize his responsibility not to teach "pernicious" doctrine. There are such insurmountable difficulties in determining when a doctrine is pernicious that in a free society we accept the inherent risks by allowing all doctrines to be aired. This acceptance is predicated on the view that freedom of expression is an inherent right of all—the wise and the not so wise. Our standard is based upon the fact that no group has a monopoly on wisdom.

I do not deny that genetics is an important factor which fashions people to be what they are. I know few people who would deny its importance. The problem arises when one begins to make value judgments on "good" and "bad" genetics. Here is where the specter of racism enters the picture. Who is to say that wealth and social position are measures of good and their absence is bad? I would suggest that these are a given society's evaluation at a given time. Since societies change, values also change, whereas the genetic pool remains constant. We must learn to live with the laws of genetics since we have little choice in the matter. What we cannot do is to adjust societal mores which presume that one group's genetic pool is superior to another's.

My opposition to R. J. Herrnstein's thesis is based upon what I perceive as "racist" ideology. Mr. Herrnstein indicates no anti-black bias, but I'm not at all satisfied that not being anti-black clears him of the charge of racism. Our experience indicates many other forms of racism. Mr. Herrnstein's difficulties in expressing his views without threat or violence are a blot on our universities and are indefensible; it is paradoxical that people who never heard of Rabbi Avtalyon or his advice have acted on it much too seriously.

JOEL A. ZASLOWSKY
Olympia Fields, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

R. J. Herrnstein subscribes to the American creed that "every individual is precious and unique, equally precious and unique." At least I assume he does since he denounces Nazi-style group superiority, and throughout his article he defends himself against the accusation of racism.

I would like to try my hand at Mr. Herrnstein's method of summarizing adversary viewpoints in syllogistic sequence, taking the above assumptions as the first premise:

1) Racial discrimination violates the principle that every individual is equally precious and unique.

2) If collectively applied, IQ tests might reveal racial differences and must thereby encourage racial discrimination.

3) Therefore, collective IQ tests are at least potentially racist and should be ruled out, no matter what they might do to "academic freedom."

Mr. Herrnstein and Mr. Podhoretz fight the validity of premise number two. Mr. Herrnstein says he took "an explicitly agnostic stand on racial [e.g., black-white] differences in tested intelligence," and, even more, that he could not have done differently because there is too much admixture of environmental (non-genetic) factors within the black population, of which past racial discrimination is just one factor. But he is looking forward to the time when "society manages to wipe out the complicating factors . . . and give everyone an equal chance." . . .

I was struck by Mr. Herrnstein's aloofness in taking up this issue, emphasizing that racial testing was neither his "goal" nor his "subject," and nowhere questioning it on moral grounds. As we all know, such black-white-oriented IQ research work was conducted in 1969 by Mr. Herrnstein's fellow psychologist, Arthur Jensen, in Berkeley and attracted a lot of publicity at that time. So one might have expected Mr. Herrnstein to make some reference to the basic morality of testing, particularly since he uses up so much space on the morality and behavior of his environmentalist adversaries. . . .

If Mr. Herrnstein had set up the syllogism underlying the thinking of his more responsible opponents the way I have tried to above, he would have noticed that the controversy between biological inheritance and environmentalism (or between Darwin and Lysenko) does not come in here at all. Of course, intelligence quotients are in our genes, but we are not allowed to diminish the "preciousness and uniqueness" of an entire race by raising the question of, or even researching into, a possible inferiority. If I may borrow a phrase from another famous case of "genetics": *"La recherche est interdite!"*. . . .

ERWIN ADLER
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A professor with very limited clinical experience, and minimal training in child development, psychological assessment, or test construction (he is a trained Skinnerian behaviorist and is an expert in learning behavior in pigeons), writes an article for the mass media making sweeping statements, listing unproved assumptions as facts . . . to foster a belief in inherited differences in intelligence of the various social classes.

A well-known educational psychologist, on the basis of selected research studies and limited research of his own, implies that enrichment programs for children of the lower social class have failed. This is picked up by Joseph Alsop and others in the popular press. He is interviewed by the New York *Times* and restates his position, arguing scientific issues in the mass media, and never repudiating the use of his work by journalists who have axes to grind. . . .

A physical scientist, through a series of polemical statements, claims competence in the area of intelligence and race, an area he has adopted only from selected second-hand material, and cries "persecution!" when others question his limited understanding of the issue.

I do not condone irresponsible behavior on anyone's part (and I do not like name-calling and threats, both of which Mr. Herrn-

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stein was subjected to). But irresponsibility breeds irresponsibility. When there is confusion on the part of some responsible people between science and politics, between objectivity and opinion, and where the scientist does not see that he may be legitimizing as scientific the stereotypes of many people, the implications are far too great to be taken lightly. It seems silly to me to see the issue as the defensive reaction of liberals to a challenge to orthodoxy. It is now fashionable to indict liberalism and attack liberals as subtly undermining academic freedom by not joining in the support of Herrnstein's and Jensen's ideas. Unfortunately, the editor of COMMENTARY has also joined the fray. Even though these individuals have an inherent right to their opinions, perhaps we should ask: Should responsible people discuss issues of great scientific complexity and extraordinary political consequence in ways that can only perpetuate the vicious racism and social-class prejudices which are eating at the vitals of our society?

MILTON F. SHORE
Silver Spring, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

If R. J. Herrnstein's article were to go unchallenged, he will have been successful in depicting himself as the intrepid scholar fighting off a rat pack of vicious radicals determined to prevent the revelations of his scholarship from reaching the people. . . .

The fact of the matter is that Mr. Herrnstein, wearing his Harvard credentials, has taken a hypothesis as old as Plato, lifted old data on twin studies, dusted the hypothesis off and dressed it up with a syllogism about social status and IQ; he has then delivered this hypothesis to those of us in and out of public office who seek "a mask for privilege" or a way out of the bitter cup of racial equality. Academic freedom and legitimate scholarship are one thing. This sort of thing is quite another. . . .

GEORGE PURVIN
Port Washington, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

R. J. Herrnstein may be correct in calling attention to a "genetic spine" resistant to change in a population, but he appears naive about the social and cultural consequences that would follow excessive weighting of this factor. When one works on problems of mankind one is involved not exclusively with science but at least equally with the humanities. . . .

What does Mr. Herrnstein mean in his closing statement that "we should be trying to mold our institutions around the inescapable limitations and variations of human ability"? Does he mean that the "limited" classes should be discouraged from aspiring to more complex achievements?

Since he refers to American egalitarianism as a "bias," does he propose a logic which would reduce the voting weight of a "limited" class member to 3/5 of a person?

Since he admits that eugenics poses "gruesome possibilities," he weakens his utilitarian position. Is he, too, perhaps affected by the "orthodoxies" which define a human being as worthy regardless of his biological evaluation? . . .

SIMON D. MESSING
Department of Anthropology
Southern Connecticut
State College
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . It seems to me that it is not a belief in the "equality of human endowment" that we were taught, but the right to equal opportunity to learn. . . . That intelligence is inherited by the individual seems axiomatic. That it can be influenced in either direction, to some degree, by environment seems by this time, too, to be axiomatic. . . . The problem has always been how to reach the native abilities of various segments of the population.

Each child in the classroom is an individual. As such he is endowed with different strengths and different weaknesses. This challenges the teacher to reach each individual—individually.

The greatness of America has been the insistence on individual rights and individual freedom. Individualized education is the outcome of that insistence. Each person can then determine for himself his own capacity. . . .

CHANA ABELLS
Holon, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

R. J. Herrnstein's experiences since his publication of research results controverting the liberal bias . . . bring to mind a remarkable English publication, *The Evolution of Man and Society,* by Cyril D. Darlington, published in London in 1969. This work, too, contains passages, which, taken out of context, could lead to an accusation of racism like that against Mr. Herrnstein.

Such a charge, however, is belied by the general tenor of Darlington's exhaustive treatment of the historical role of individual genetic differences, as well as by his conclusion. I quote from its final page: ". . . the creative individual is always a unique recombination [of genes] arising from outbreeding, arising indeed from the organized uncertainty of recombination on whose exploitation organic evolution depends. . . . [M]an's future prospects are proportionate to the amount of genetic diversity he maintains among the interfertile members of his own species." The author, a geneticist and an Oxford don, alludes in passing to the snobbery with which he as a scientist has had to contend within the British establishment. This is reminiscent of the liberal pseudo-defense of Herrnstein against radical outbursts.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, however, Darlington's volume, which could ultimately turn out to be the outstanding contribution of the first post-Hiroshima generation of academicians, has never been reviewed in this country, let alone issued by an American publisher. The latter may possibly be excused on the grounds that the author's dry wit and understatement perhaps are not suited to an American audience. But the lack of reviews, even in scholarly journals, cannot be so easily dismissed. It is part and parcel of the liberal prejudice against heterodox opinions. . . .

R. E. STEUSSY
Portland State University
Portland, Oregon

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

R. J. Herrnstein's conclusions are simply unpopular with the general run of the American public; thus, it is a poor political move to agree with him. It is true that many parents are concerned about below-grade-level reading scores and low Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results in their schools. I happen to teach in just such a community and the big problem here seems to revolve around finding an acceptable answer that keeps the community happy.

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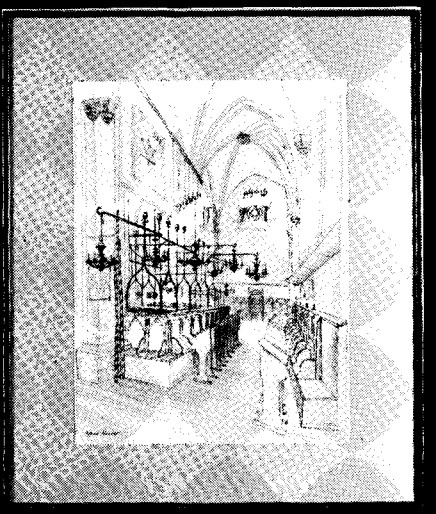

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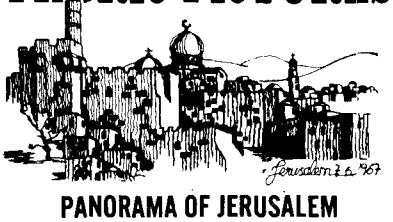

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Obviously, the school administration could refer to Mr. Herrnstein and explain that achievement differences are sometimes the result of genetic differences. However, this line of argument just doesn't go over at PTA meetings and school-board meetings—it's terrible public relations. If the genetic argument were used, the cries of "elitist," "snob," etc. would most certainly be heard. . . . The schools, it seems, are in the business of pleasing the public, not educating the children. So Mr. Herrnstein's genetic explanations get nowhere, but unfortunately the question of individual differences remains unanswered.

Let us turn to the sociological point of view to find an acceptable answer. The traditional sociologists like Hollingshead, Warner, etc. emphasize "class." The various social classes bring up their children differently and this enables the so-called higher classes to train their children better for school; this in turn leads to better grades, higher SAT scores, and better reading-level results. However, like Mr. Herrnstein's views, this is not a politically viable line of reasoning. Its use of the heated term "social class" smacks of Marxism. School boards and school administrations won't discuss test differences from the class point of view because, like the genetic argument, it is simply unpopular to do so.

Another explanation for achievement-test differences could be that the teachers are cheating the children by not covering the correct material and by not teaching properly. This is Hofstadter's "paranoid style" converted to American public education—it is a politically sound argument because it plays on the anger of the public. It gives the hard-pressed taxpayer a scapegoat. . . . The move is on in Ossining to cover set materials so that no child will be cheated. Teachers will be held accountable for coverage by standardized testing or by other methods. This procedure gets around any discussion of genetics, class, environment, etc. and gives the public a popular answer to the question of individual differences.

If freedom of discussion is limited at Harvard and Princeton, just imagine what the situation is like in the local public schools.

WILLIAM H. CRAWFORD
Ossining High School
Ossining, New York

R. J. HERRNSTEIN writes:

I had hoped in my article to expose academic disingenuousness: for example, scholars capitalizing on the misbehavior of student radicals so as to defend egalitarian myths from data that would dispel them. But no exposé of mine would be as revealing as John Morrow's letter, to one who knows the facts. His address suggests he is a biologist and his letter dissociates him from the radicals—he even calls the Students for a Democratic Society "campus troglodytes" whose behavior "casts doubt upon [their] sanity." But then, turning his attention to me, he warns that the research on IQ is unsatisfactory, alluding vaguely to eminent fellow-biologists Cavalli-Sforza and Lewontin. Not only is the heritability of IQ questionable, he proclaims, but the very idea of *any* science of human population genetics is misguided, "now or in the foreseeable future," since we cannot do the necessary experiments on human breeding. To people who find human genetics threatening, this must come as good news indeed. And then, to conclude, he assures his readers that we can all forget about IQ's heritability and get on with the pressing business of liberal egalitarianism—reforming society.

But the letter is actually vintage American Lysenkoism, and if you do not take my word for it, you should look at the giant (965-page), recent (1971) book by Cavalli-Sforza himself (with his collaborator, W. F. Bodmer). The book, *The Genetics of Human Populations*, is the definitive text for the very science that Mr. Morrow disposed of in his letter, and it is richly dense with just the sorts of conclusions that Mr. Morrow wants to shield you from—including prominently the estimation of the heritability of IQ. Say Cavalli-Sforza and Bodmer in a sweeping paragraph: "As discussed in Chapter 9, most estimates of the heritability of IQ are quite high, ranging from about 40-80 per cent . . . ," and "Undoubtedly, substantial innate differences with respect to IQ exist within most human populations." They then go on to note that the social classes differ in intellectual endowment, just as I do in my own analysis of the same data. Mr. Morrow does not want you to know that dozens upon dozens of studies of tens of thousands of people have built an immense case for some degree of heritability of

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IQ in contemporary society—as unshakable a case as I know of for any comparable conclusion in the social sciences. No one, not even David Cohen, Christopher Jencks, or Karl Deutsch (whom David Z. Robinson invokes in his letter) has produced any factual counter-evidence for the conclusion, and at least Cohen and Jencks frankly acknowledge it.

One way or another, Mr. Morrow disguises what is essentially a moral question as a factual one—doing a disservice thereby to both morality and scholarship. Joseph A. Zaslowsky, on the other hand, seems to accept the fact of inherited mental capacity, then labels it "pernicious." Can a *fact* be pernicious? When he brands results of the study of human differences "pernicious doctrine," he fails, it seems to me, to distinguish between dogma and data. While I, too, abhor doctrines I consider inhumane, I cannot persuade myself to suppress or ignore information because it makes trouble for liberal environmentalism. Knowledge about innate intellectual differences does not justify racism, fascism, totalitarianism, poverty, unemployment, genocide, or any of the other scare words one hears bandied about. What it does imply is that the promises of a classless society will, in practice, run into trouble—as they clearly have. If intelligence varies innately, then it will do so even if the facts are unknown or hidden, and the variation would lead to the creation of social classes anyway.

Some people get alarmed by talk of inborn differences because they are unaccustomed to thinking statistically. They may not realize that even though the average child in the average upper-middle-class family has a higher IQ than the average child in a working-class family, the full range turns up at every social stratum. There is all the difference in the world between social classes based on individual attributes and a rigid caste system based on arbitrary rules of membership. The first arises in any democracy; the second is the antithesis of democracy. Whatever Erwin Adler had in mind when he asks for "some reference to the basic morality of testing," I would say that mental testing—by revealing the differences within classes, even within families—is an instrument of liberation from prejudice and racism. That may explain why intelligence testing was as unpopular as it was in Nazi Germany, where its measurement of individual differences must have seemed *unvolkisch* and inimical to the lethal brand of egalitarianism that the Nazis preached.

To turn to more local matters, David Landau, lately of the *Harvard Crimson*, says I exaggerate his former newspaper's attention to me. "A grand total of seven news articles," he says, turned up in the *Crimson* from September 1971 to February 1, 1972. But as I wrote to Mr. Landau after he sent a copy of his letter to me, in my incomplete set of *Crimsons* I found, between September and February, *17* articles and editorials of various sorts. Then, from February to June, there were *13* more. Thirty articles plus about a dozen letters and miscellaneous ads is more attention than I can remember the *Crimson*'s paying a single subject, although it is true that the radicals continually cooked up new episodes, which the *Crimson* would then cover. But this collaboration between the SDS and the *Crimson* was what I had hoped to bring out. Apparently, I did.

Finally, a personal sidelight. Mr. Landau accuses my original article on IQ of blatant suppositiousness (whatever that is); Milton F. Shore finds me limited, minimally trained, nothing but an expert on pigeons; George Purvin accuses me of connivance with those who seek "a mask for privilege"; Simon D. Messing wonders if I would like to disenfranchise the poor; and David Z. Robinson believes that the desire to justify racism accounts for the attention my writings get. But they are really not talking about my scholarship or my educational background or my politics or my social or racial attitudes—about which they can know little or nothing. They are, rather, showing the anger one directs at apostasy—at my transgression against their egalitarian orthodoxy.

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

David Z. Robinson assures me that there is complete freedom of discussion on campus. I can assure him that as compared with the climate when I was an undergraduate at Columbia between 1946 and 1950 the atmosphere is uncongenial to free discussion. But I daresay only someone who dissents in any significant respect from the campus orthodoxies of the moment would be aware of how coercive and intimidating the situation is.

As to the matter of settled issues: in the first place, anti-Semitism is *not* a settled issue any longer in the intellectual community. Several classical anti-Semitic ideas—among them the idea of the Jew as exploiter and the idea of a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the culture—have surfaced again in the last few years and now have wider currency than at any time since the end of the Second World War. But my point is not whether there are or should be settled issues among intellectuals. My point is that an effort is being made to declare a *certain cluster* of issues settled, although by no stretch of the imagination can they be regarded as such. I think this effort should be resisted by all who believe in the value of free discussions; instead we continually see it defended and apologized for.

## "The Cousinhood"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In an otherwise excellent article ["Our (English) Crowd," April] Chaim Raphael says that when Lord Balfour asked Lord Walter Rothschild to bring the Balfour Declaration to the attention of the British Zionist Federation, the request was "almost as an afterthought." He hints also that it was addressed to Lord Rothschild in deference to the latter's relationship to the "Cousinhood." Both statements are wrong, and may easily be misinterpreted.

Dr. Weizmann tells us in his autobiography that the Declaration was addressed to Lord Rothschild at his request. Dr. Weizmann was then President of the British Zionist Federation, and Lord Rothschild was one of a small political committee of only six of the British Zionist Federation. Balfour had also consulted, while in Canada, with the President of its Zionist Federation.

Lord Rothschild was in his own right a significant representative of British Zionism. The Declaration was intended primarily for the world Zionist movement, with full knowledge of its publicly declared aims.

This fact is of importance.

HARRY COHEN
Zionist Organization
of America
New York City

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CHAIM RAPHAEL writes:

Harry Cohen's gentle criticism makes me realize that I wrote too elliptically. I should have said that Balfour's request *sounded* almost like an afterthought. But surely Mr. Cohen himself documents the second point. The letter was sent to a Rothschild, rather than to the head of the Zionist Federation, because to address this historic Declaration to the top British Rothschild gave it tremendous "Cousinhood" weight, whether the anti-Zionist "cousins" liked it or not. This was what Weizmann was after in his unremitting cultivation of the Rothschilds all through this period. His letters to a whole variety of them, full of his magnetic blend of intelligence and charm, in the years preceding the Declaration, are a *tour de force,* as will be seen when they are published in the collection of Weizmann's papers now being edited by Meyer Weisgal.

But here's a howler. When I referred to a Cousinhood industrialist who helped to build up Palestine as "Sir Bernard Waley-Cohen," I meant, of course, his father, Sir Robert, and without a hyphen.

## Collective Guilt

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz ["Vietnam and Collective Guilt," March] might be right when he argues that Robert J. Lifton is guilty of "shoddy thinking and unctuous moralizing.". . . It appears to me, however, that Lifton is right in holding the American people responsible for the deeds of their government, whether or not they agree with the government's policies. Only one who resists such policies with his entire being and ability is totally free from responsibility. This moral concept is implied in the First Commandment. Why were the Israelites commanded to offer the paschal sacrifice, to turn away the angel coming to slay the first-born? . . . Did not God send the plague to compel Pharaoh to let the Israelites go free? The answer is that the Israelites shared Pharaoh's guilt by not resisting his course; and only a miracle and sacrifice could save them from the fate of the Egyptians! On the other hand, the Egyptians, even the slaves, shared Pharaoh's punishment because they did not resist him completely.

The prophets reprimanded not only the princes and priests but also the people, often also victims, for injustice. In war we rain destruction on civilians, although they do not shape policy. . . .

Moral living is extremely difficult for the individual, but only in total moral responsibility is there hope for society. This teaching was emphasized by the prophets, and especially by Ezekiel.

(Rabbi) NATHAN BARACK
Congregation Beth El
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I cannot justify the destruction wrought by U.S. involvement in Vietnam. I held this opinion when I supported the stated U.S. purpose in Southeast Asia and, obviously, when I opposed that purpose. I think it can be said that no one is happy about the destruction during war and at best it is justified as some sort of necessary evil. Yet in Vietnam the destruction and devastation reached horrific proportions. . . .

The guilt is ours. I share the guilt. You share the guilt along with 200 million other U.S. citizens. We divide the guilt equally among us and we each carry one-two-hundred-millionth of the burden. We are the people of the United States. As we share in its glory so we share in its sorrow, in its pride so in its guilt. . . . Whether or not one feels that U.S. involvement was justified, whether or not one feels the goals were achieved, one feels guilt at having brought this destruction to our planet. . . .

Why do we all share the guilt? As each of us pays taxes, celebrates the Fourth of July, so we are also responsible for our government. . . . This may seem an overextended use of the word "responsible." Yet the extension of this word to its ultimate limit (replacing "government" with the human race") is the goal of human progress. . . .

I believe that guilt played a large part in my involvement in the anti-war movement. I felt hounded every time I picked up a newspaper reporting new Vietnam


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casualties. For those who were against U.S. involvement even more than those who supported Nixon's policies, the sense of guilt is there. The fact that the destruction was carried out in the name of the U.S. government (of the people, by the people, and for the people) does not incriminate Lieutenant Calley any more than myself or John Smith from Anytown, U.S.A. . . .

Every human being is fully accountable for all his actions, and as he or she claims membership in different groups, for the actions of those groups. We are all guilty "of complicity in what the American government has done there."

One may refuse to accept the responsibility, but the victims are not so easily persuaded.

REUVEN LEVINSON
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I thoroughly agree with Norman Podhoretz's feelings on collective guilt, I think it's time somebody said something for U.S. leaders who were responsible for the conduct of the Vietnam affair.

The same people who want to indict the American people for the monstrous crime of Vietnam have also told us that Vietnam was the greatest crime in history, with the possible exception of Hitlerism. In particular, they have accused us of bombing helpless, innocent bystanders last December in Hanoi, while the My Lai affair was paraded across the front pages as if nothing so criminal had ever happened before. We are also given to understand that the U.S. was criminal for coming to the aid of South Vietnam, which after all was merely undergoing a social "revolution" exactly like the American revolution. . . .

Well—there's not much use getting into the question of whether the Vietcong were really the equivalent of Americans at Lexington and Concord, or whether there's any difference between Communist revolutionaries and our ancestors in 1776. I think we can say that from previous examples of Communist takeovers, it was a legitimate mistake—if mistake it was—for us to suppose the Vietcong were acting like the Castro guerrillas, or the Nazi-sponsored groups in Czechoslovakia or the Polish corridor. . . .

But the subject of our monstrous criminality in Vietnam is less ambiguous. Most defenders of U.S. morality have made the mistake of citing examples of Communist atrocities, to which the legitimate answer is that two wrongs don't make a right.

But we don't really need Communist examples. We don't even need examples from other nations. We can take them from our own country's actions in World War II.

Of course, everybody has accused us of indescribable immorality for using the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nobody seems, however, to have noticed that before those bombs were dropped, we had visited virtually every large population center in Japan with incendiary bombs, killing a good many times as many people as the total who died in the atom bombings . . . (even if you count the delayed deaths from radiation, etc.). Some of the Tokyo raids produced death tolls quite comparable to Hiroshima, even in a single raid. . . .

But all the accusing and finger-pointing are at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. . . . In the eulogies over Harry Truman, one writer in *Newsweek* argued that, after all, the atom-bombings weren't Truman's fault but that of his wicked military advisers!

This is about the level of moral philosophy on U.S. wars. We strain at gnats and gulp down legions of camels. It doesn't speak much for our collective intellects that our "best and brightest" can't produce anything better.

And what of Vietnam itself, for which a prominent jurist who had been at Nuremberg has demanded that U.S. leaders should be turned over to another Nuremberg tribunal? . . . Let us consider the December bombings of Hanoi, the subject of the latest outburst of breast-beating. According to Hanoi's own figures, the B-52 bombings of Hanoi killed 1,318 people in twelve days.

This sort of statistic usually elicits remarks that we U.S. warriors are not only murderers, but singularly wasteful murderers, taking so many tons of bombs and so many millions of dollars to kill one innocent bystander in Hanoi. And it is true, we were much less wasteful in World War II, and a lot more deadly. In two nights of bombing in Hamburg and Dresden more than 200,000 died. . . .

In comparing those figures, suddenly a light dawns. Could it be that the object of bombing Hanoi was more than the killing of innocent bystanders? That perhaps somebody worked rather hard to see that as few innocent bystanders were killed as possible? . . .

So—before anyone else demands a new Nuremberg trial for our Vietnam leaders—let's have an honest, reputable historian . . . undertake a thorough study of U.S. morality in World War II as compared with Vietnam. And if he has time, he might also add a few other comparisons, just in case some liberal theologian gets the idea that the U.S. is the only nation left . . . that commits atrocities in wartime. . . .

ALFRED B. MASON
Bellport, New York

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

The limits and extent of responsibility and guilt are very difficult and perhaps impossible to determine in the abstract. In the concrete case of Vietnam, however, I still cannot see in what meaningful sense any person who opposed American policies by word and deed can be held responsible for those policies, even assuming that they were as unambiguously immoral or criminal as is now so widely believed.

## Correction

Two errors in the presentation of the statistical data in Milton Himmelfarb's "The Jewish Vote (Again)" [June], require correction. The first is in the second table on p. 83, col. 2, "Changes in Democratic, Republican, and Neither Percentages (1972 minus 1968)." Read:

| | *Dem.* | *Rep.* | *Neither* |
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The second is in the last table (p. 84, col. 1), which should be as follows:

| | *Rank by income* | *Rank by Rise in Abstention* |
|---|---|---|
| Great Neck Estates | 1 | 7 |
| South Beverlywood | 2 | 6 |
| Great Neck | 3 | 3 |
| Manhattan Beach | 4 | 4.5 |
| Sheepshead Bay | 5 | 4.5 |
| Fairfax | 6 | 2 |
| Brighton Beach | 7 | 1 |

The Great Neck Estates (15th and 16th election districts of the 16th Assembly District) registration totals are 2,004 in 1968 and 2,177 in 1972.

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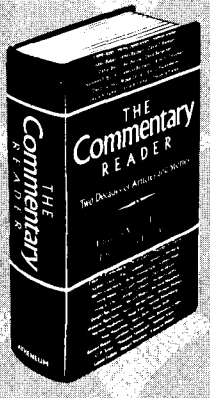


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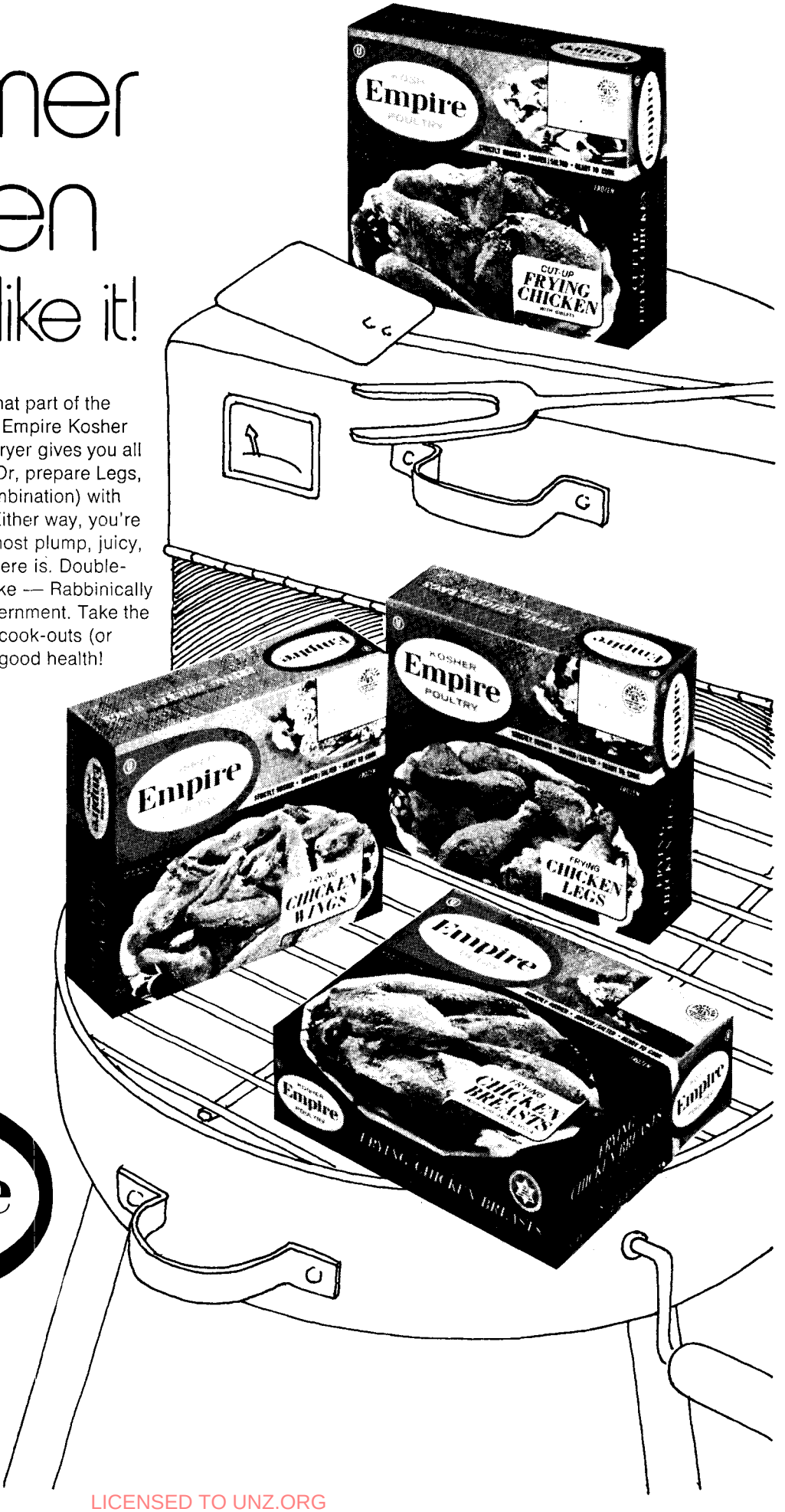


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# The Masada Complex

*Robert Alter*

*History, however, is not the past. The past is always a created ideology with a purpose, designed to control individuals, or motivate societies, or inspire classes. Nothing has been so corruptly used as concepts of the past.*
—J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past*

IT MAY seem surprising that an archaeological site should provide the focus of debate on basic issues of national policy, but given the peculiarity of Israel's location in history and geography, there is a certain appropriateness in that odd link between ancient events and modern politics. Archaeology, of course, is Israel's greatest natural resource, both in the strictly economic sense and in a figurative one, feeding into the tourist trade, on the one hand, and into the romantic myth, on the other hand, of return to a proud national independence that was cut off two thousand years ago. Among the rich abundance of archaeological sites in Israel, a compelling centrality has long been attached to Masada, the forbidding mountain-fortress in the Judean Desert overlooking the Dead Sea, where the last stand of the rebellion against the Roman legions took place in 73 C.E. Masada has repeatedly been a place of pilgrimage—the cultic concept seems quite strictly applicable, and the Hebrew equivalent, *aliyah l'regel*, "going up by foot," is very literally appropriate—for Israeli youth groups, army recruits, new immigrants, and plain citizens on vacation. The fortress of the ancient Zealots has pointedly been chosen for a significant military ritual, the swearing-in of the armored corps. A ceremony of this sort, held on a March evening this year at the end of a sound-and-light show, inaugurated twenty-fifth-anniversary events in Israel. The ceremony, as always, was enacted by torchlight, the recruits intoning in unison the now famous line from Yitzhak Lamdan's long poem, *Masada* (1927), "Masada shall not fall again." Later, I would like to return to the poem and its impact on Israeli consciousness.

Since Yigal Yadin's spectacular digs in the seasons of 1963-64 and 1964-65, Masada has also been a highly visible product for export. Yadin's vividly narrated, sumptuously illustrated book on the excavations and the history of the place is still an admirable presentation volume,* and one recalls the striking success of his 1966-67 American lecture tour with a photographic exhibition on Masada at the time of the book's publication. More recently, also in the category of presentation volumes, the Four Winds Press has published an account of the last stand at Masada excerpted from Josephus, generously illustrated with photographs of archaeological finds,† and there may well be other productions of this sort that have escaped my attention. At least two different popular novels on the Zealot uprising have been published in the last year here and in England, and rumor has it that two films on the subject are now in preparation, one a documentary on the archaeological site, the other a full-length narrative on the rebellion. Meanwhile, the defiant pledge, "Masada shall not fall again," has been enjoying, since June 1967, unprecedented currency in this country, often used as a slogan by members of the Jewish Defense League, taking its place on many a wall alongside denunciations of imperialism and exhortations to sisterhood, even appearing in the peroration of a pro-Israel article in the *Village Voice*.

These details of background may help to provide a sense of the special resonance in a retort made by Golda Meir to Stewart Alsop at a Washington press luncheon during her recent American visit, reported by Alsop in his *Newsweek* column of March 19. Toward the end of the lunch, Alsop tells us, Mrs. Meir suddenly turned on him, and one can almost hear that gravelly, authoritative, I-brook-no-contradiction voice saying to the journalist: "And you, Mr. Alsop, you say that we have a Masada complex. . . . It is true. We do have a Masada complex. We have a pogrom complex. We have a Hitler complex." Alsop's demurral to Mrs. Meir's representation of his own views was ignored; relentlessly pursuing her train of thought, the Prime Minister proceeded to deliver "a small, moving oration about the spirit of Israel, a spirit

ROBERT ALTER, a contributing editor of COMMENTARY, is professor of Hebrew and comparative literature at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of, among other works, *After the Tradition* and *Fielding and the Nature of the Novel*.

* *Masada*, Random House (1966).

† *Revolt in Judea: The Road to Masada*, by Arthur Tamarin, 157 pp., $7.95.



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that would prefer death rather than surrender to the dark terrors of the Jewish past." The truth of such affirmations of national faith can hardly be gainsaid, but Alsop goes on in his column to wonder whether the evocation of the horrors and heroism of the past will always provide a lucid perspective on the political complexities of the present.

Specifically, he suggests that early this year Anwar Sadat conveyed to Nixon and Kissinger through his foreign-affairs adviser, Hafez Ismail, an expression of willingness to enter into an interim agreement with Israel involving the reopening of the Suez Canal, provided Israel would agree eventually to discuss evacuation of the whole Sinai. Golda Meir, responding suspiciously to this admittedly limited overture, was prepared to concede so little that any initiation of real negotiations was precluded. What really went on, of course, between Ismail and Nixon, then Meir and Nixon, is a matter of conjecture upon hearsay, but one sympathizes with Alsop when he questions the long-term wisdom of repeatedly rejecting out of hand the possibility of negotiation because of mistrust, however the mistrust may be conditioned by recurrent historical trauma. Israel's ultimate problem, after all, as an increasing number of Israeli intellectuals have been contending, is not the maintenance of a *cordon sanitaire,* the strategic efficacy of which could at best be a matter of decades, but the creation of some kind of peaceful co-existence with its neighbors. This is the logic of Alsop's monitory conclusion: "To the horizon, it is easy to see that Israel can hold what it has. But beyond the horizon, it may be that Israel is creating its own Masada."

The exchange between Alsop and Mrs. Meir produced some interesting reverberations in Israel, while *Newsweek* on its part apparently felt enough need to justify itself, or explain the exchange, to devote, in its long piece on Israel occasioned by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Jewish state (May 7), a three-quarter-page inset to "The Meaning of Masada." In the month after the appearance of the Alsop column, the Friday supplement of *Ha'aretz,* Israel's leading paper, published three different articles which responded to the Meir-Alsop contretemps, two of them on the history of Masada and its interpretative uses, the third analyzing the political implications of Mrs. Meir's response to Alsop's criticism. Though I haven't been following *Ma'ariv* and *Yediot Aharonot,* the two large afternoon competitors of *Ha'aretz,* I would assume that the incident did not go unnoticed there, either. (All this may seem a little less bizarre if one keeps in mind that the overseas editions of *Newsweek* and *Time* have a large circulation among the educated, English-reading class in Israel, the Hebrew press tending to be skimpy, spotty, or oddly skewed in its coverage of events outside the Middle East.) As Dan Margalit and Matti Golan, political analysts for *Ha'aretz,* noted, Mrs. Meir chose to react to Alsop's column not through her Washington embassy nor through an ordinary foreign-office spokesman, as one might have expected, but through a senior official close to her in Jerusalem, Michael Elitsur, who controls the North American desk of the Israeli Foreign Office. The Prime Minister seems to have been touched to the quick by the suggestion that through intransigence she might be the maker of a future Masada. Elitsur's letter to *Newsweek* (April 16) denied that there had been any hint of concessions from Cairo, as Alsop had implied, and the Jerusalem official affirmed that for Israelis Masada was "a symbol, not an ideal." (Though literary critics as well as diplomats love to make such distinctions, I must confess that to my eye the boundaries between symbol and ideal blur and dissolve when the past is used as sanction for an ideology.)

WHAT happened at Masada, and what in fact has been the meaning of Masada in Israel's imagination of its own predicament? As with most things, the more we have come to know about the subject, the more perplexing it has become to answer these seemingly straightforward questions. The only extant literary source on the events at Masada in 73 C.E. is Josephus's *The Jewish War,* an account by an ambivalent traitor to the rebellion, written in Greek chiefly for Roman consumption, which presents the resistance fighters in their last fierce resolve as more Roman than the Romans. That Josephus should be the sole source on Masada is itself noteworthy. Rabbinic literature, though rich in anecdotes and legends on the fall of Jerusalem three years earlier, is silent on the whole affair because it views the Zealots—Josephus gives them the more specific name of Sicarii, or Dagger-Wielders, Assassins—as fanatic dissidents, not as the *she'erit ha-pleita,* the last remnant of the Jewish people in its struggle for independence. Josephus's own attitude toward the Sicarii is deeply divided, perhaps was bound to be by the ambiguities of his situation as a former rebel commander who had gone over to the Romans. Although his history concludes in a great surge of praise for the final heroism of the defenders of Masada, he emphatically represents them not as the standard-bearers of the Jewish nation but, on the contrary, as a ruthless, avaricious band of cutthroats who were crueler to their countrymen than to the Romans, setting a precedent for murderous divisiveness among Jews: "First to begin this lawlessness among kinsmen were the Sicarii, who left no word unspoken, no deed untried, to insult and destroy the objects of their foul plots."

Such an uncompromising characterization obviously raises the issue of Josephus's reliability,

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but if one begins to question his credibility on the character of the Sicarii—his version of them seems not unlikely—there is at least as much warrant for questioning his account of their heroic suicide. According to Josephus, the Zealots, realizing that their inner defense wall had been breached by the Romans, decided to die by their own hands rather than submit to the enemy. They proceeded to draw lots and then slew one another, men, women, and children, 960 in all, so that when the Romans entered the fortress to find "the rows of dead bodies, they did not exult over them as enemies but admired the nobility of their resolve." The mass suicide is preceded by a long speech by Eleazar Ben Ya'ir, the rebel commander, a set-piece obviously invented by Josephus in accordance with the convention established by Thucydides. There are no grounds in rabbinic tradition for the justification of suicide as an escape from political subjugation (coercion to idolatry is another matter), and so it is hardly surprising that Ben Ya'ir's speech cites no Jewish sources. On the contrary, his praise of splendid death—"let us do each other an ungrudging kindness, preserving our freedom as a glorious winding sheet"—strikes the steely note of martial Rome, and his rhetoric takes him as far as India for precedents to the deed he is urging. Ben Ya'ir's exhortation has a noble ring, but its vision of human existence and of Jewish history leads only to a black cul-de-sac of doom. God must surely have sentenced his people to extinction, he argues from the evidence of recent national disasters. In any case, reflective men from time immemorial have realized that "*life* is the calamity for man, not death." One wonders what has happened to the essential Deuteronomic injunction, "And thou shalt choose life," especially since this radical pessimism is attributed by Josephus's Ben Ya'ir to "the actions and spirit of our forefathers."

The dark rationale offered for the Zealots' suicide in the sole account of it we have makes it singularly unedifying as a model for Jewish nationalism, while at least one critic, Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, the contentious editor of the *Jewish Spectator,* has questioned whether the mass suicide ever took place.* The defenders of Masada, she argues, were fighters, not martyrs, and the logic of all their previous actions would have led them to go down fighting or to try to escape rather than immolate themselves. Besides, Josephus, who seems to have tricked thirty-nine fellow soldiers at the fall of Jotapata into killing one another while he cunningly preserved his own life, might have had reason to repair his damaged public image by fabricating a large-scale suicide pact at Masada in which self-slaughter in preference to surrender could be presented as a sublime symbol of Jewish heroism. Mrs. Weiss-Rosmarin does not explain how the Romans, who after all had marched several thousand men into the fallen fortress, could be expected to believe the suicide story if it was merely an invention of Josephus's, but the doubts she raises (there are more than I have indicated) are not to be easily brushed aside; and even if the Zealots did finally kill themselves, the difficulties she points to in Josephus's text suggest that the process of mythologizing Masada began before the ashes of the great rebellion had cooled.

* See her articles in the *Jewish Spectator,* "Masada, Josephus, and Yadin" (October 1967) and "Masada Revisited" (December 1969).

HISTORY and the past, to adopt the useful distinction made by J. H. Plumb in *The Death of the Past,* are two very different things. History is an intellectual endeavor that seeks to understand the endlessly complicated, ambiguous, shifting facts of what men and women through the ages have actually done, how social change has come about. History is thus committed to a sub-species of truth, however confusing or painful the truth may turn out to be. The definition of a past, on the other hand, that societies are constantly undertaking, is least of all concerned with the truth. Rather, in the making of the past, historical experience is subjected to drastic selection and reordering, when not simply invented whole cloth, in order to validate, justify, confirm the status and actions of a society, and, most particularly, of its ruling elite. What is paradoxical about Masada is that even as Professor Yadin and his diggers painstakingly unearthed its long-buried bones and scrolls and coins and artifacts, the mountain-fortress has stubbornly persisted more as a focus of Israel's past than as a fact of its history.

Yadin himself, impressive as his archaeological work has been, is not without complicity in perpetuating this state of affairs. His meticulous account of the excavations is marked by occasional observations such as this: "Masada represents for all of us in Israel . . . a symbol of courage, a monument to our great national figures, heroes who chose death over a life of physical and moral serfdom." Yadin does not say whether Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai, who chose the founding of an academy at Yavneh over death in a doomed rebellion, is to be regarded as having opted for a life of moral serfdom. Jewish tradition, at any rate, has always seen Yavneh and not Masada as the great symbol of national survival against terrible odds—of regeneration. To every man his own symbol in the making of a past, and so Yadin can blandly assert that the Zealots "elevated Masada to an undying symbol which has stirred hearts throughout the last nineteen centuries." As a rhetorical flourish this may have a satisfying completeness, but the absence of references to Masada in the source-texts of Jewish tradition

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suggests that it stirred very few hearts until the 20th century, perhaps not even till after the publication of the Lamdan poem in 1927. Yadin's ready acceptance, moreover, of the historicity of the Masada story in Josephus, and the quickness with which he identified particulars of his finds with details of that story, would seem to be motivated as much by patriotic enthusiasm as by scholarly zeal.

But even glossing over such historical difficulties, one is hard put to say of what Masada should be a symbol for modern Israel. By Josephus's account, Ben Ya'ir and his comrades-at-arms were brave and determined men, but it is difficult to ignore the grim fact that the meaning of the way they chose was ghastly self-destruction. Characteristic in the effort to wriggle past this obstacle are the words spoken this spring by Moshe Dayan at the ceremony commemorating the 1900th anniversary of the death of Masada's defenders: "Masada gave Jewish history a grandeur steeped in blood and valor, faith and pride, not only in facing death, but also in facing the trials of life." The rhetoric of blood and valor, as nervous as it is likely to make one, can perhaps be excused by the pomp and ceremony of the occasion; but it is far from clear how the last speech of Masada's commander, that despairing, doom-ridden celebration of death which culminated in the voluntary massacre of nearly a thousand men, women, and children, could help Jews face the trials of life. Yigal Yadin, in a response to a *Newsweek* reporter for the May 7th article I mentioned earlier, was a little more concrete in making a connection between Masada and the challenge of life. Young Israelis, he confessed, tend to be disenchanted with the grim example of self-slaughter offered by Masada. What the last stand of the Sicarii, then, suggests to them is that Israel must remain strong enough never to be confronted again with the Zealots' terrible choice of death or submission. Now, this is certainly sane, but what it means is that Masada symbolizes the imperative for the Jewish state never again to be Masada, which makes it a peculiar symbol, to say the least.

MASADA received its real impetus as an image of the Zionist enterprise and thus as a national myth in Yitzhak Lamdan's poem (which by now has gone through a score or more of printings), and we may understand more clearly the contemporary invocation of the place if we note how Lamdan treated it. *Masada* is an allegorical rendering of the Jewish settlement of Palestine in the years after the First World War, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, and the pogroms that followed them. It is made up of brief poetic units, part lyrical, part narrative, swelling at its worst to a flood of repetitious poetic effusion in strained sublime style, occasionally concentrating in individual images or poems of stark power. What penetration the poem does have derives ultimately from a single central insight of Lamdan's, that the historical phenomenon of Zionism was born out of the bleakest hopelessness of European Jewry as a last desperate wager against extinction, when all other bets had failed. The speaker of the poem, the allegorical type of the Jew returning to Zion, has made his way back to Masada, wounded, exhausted, half-dead, from the mayhem of warring Europe and the bitter disappointment of promised redemption through world revolution. Masada itself "sits on the brink of chaos," but it is there that he will raise the "banner of the last rebellion," in the soul-steeling knowledge that "We have one treasure left—the daring after despair." In context, the declaration that Masada will not fall again is less a proudly confident affirmation than a fierce cry of desperation, echoing over a blood-darkened landscape of destruction amid the distant thunder-claps of a threatened apocalypse. The great world that stretches out from the foot of Masada has become a claustrophobic nightmare for the Survivor who clambers up to the ramparts of the Zealot fortress to take his last stand there.

*Oh, mercy is gone from the world!*
*Earth's circle—a hangman's knot at my throat.*
*Earth's broadness—a hangman's grip,*
*All its roads are throttling fingers.*
*And so I am here before you, Masada,*
*The one who escaped. . . .*
*In my brain—blood-flags flap in the storm of terror*
*Blowing from the four corners of the sky.*
*Searing tongues of an* auto-da-fé *lick at my wounds—*
*And over all:*
*Chaos, chaos, chaos—*
*No people, no land, no God, and no man.*

I do not mean to suggest that the Masada invoked by Israeli political leaders or used as a setting for military ceremonies is identical in meaning and feeling with the Masada of Lamdan's poem, though I suspect there may be a substantial, and disquieting, carry-over from poetry to politics. The whole question of the connection between literary and political images of the past is more complicated and crucial in Israel than in any other country I know. The antecedents of political Zionism, without which the movement might never have gotten underway, are literary, going back to the development in 19th-century Russia and Poland of Hebrew poetry and fiction steeped in visions of a biblical Zion. Hebrew literary activity continued to serve a central energizing function in the Zionist enterprise throughout the earlier 20th century in a way that may seem strange to Americans and Western Europeans, whose modern literature has tended to be adversary and private in its concerns. It was to a large extent the creative selectivity and linguistic

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resourcefulness of writers like Mapu, Tchernichovsky, Shlonsky, Alterman, Lamdan, Uri Zvi Greenberg, that produced a usable past, in J. H. Plumb's sense, for the renascent Jewish state.

One must give Hebrew literature its historical due, but there is, I would contend, a danger in all this deriving from the differences between the exigencies of the poetic and the political imagination. A characteristic strength of the poetic imagination is its ability to pursue the possibilities of present things to the limits of their most extreme realization: the world can be seen in the glaring light of ultimacy, its shadows blacker, its bright surfaces blinding, everything tremulous with a terrible intensity that is only intimated in the realm of ordinary experience. The poetic process, moreover, through its essentially allusive operation, fosters a cognitive conservatism when directed to political events, by the very logic of its instruments of expression representing the immediate historical moment in terms of some deeply felt, imaginatively imperative past. The political imagination, on the other hand, needs to work in precisely the opposite direction. It must of course be aware of the data of history, but it knows that the "lesson" of history is almost never a direct and simple repetition, and that to identify, or confuse, present with past can be a fatal mistake in matters of state policy. Where there is something aprioristic about the poetic imagination, because the structures of language and literary tradition are givens, the political imagination has to be rigorously empirical, making constant discriminations about the changing differential elements of the problems with which it is confronted.

The proper cast of mind for coping with the realm of politics is sober, skeptical, nonchalant; current events are not to be dramatized and magnified but, on the contrary, searched out most undramatically for their qualifying components, for the various practical options of responding to them and modifying their possible consequences. Torchlit military ceremonies on the top of Masada are, I fear, a literal and dubious translation into public life of a literary metaphor, and a Prime Minister's subsuming Holocaust, pogroms, and Israel's present state of siege under the rubric of Masada might be the kind of hangover from poetry that could befuddle thinking on urgent political issues.

A TRENCHANT critique of the Masada Complex along lines similar to these was carried out by Benjamin Kedar, a young Israeli historian, in the April 22nd issue of *Ha'aretz*. Kedar begins by characterizing Masada as an Israeli "myth, obsession [in the Hebrew, *dybbuk*], complex," and he goes on to propose that the symbol of Masada has had such a powerful claim on Israeli consciousness especially because of the Holocaust. Thus, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising is thought of as a Masada, and in a double exposure of mythic imagery, Israel's predicament is conceived as a ghetto surrounded by overwhelming hordes, a fortress besieged by the assembled might of imperial legions. (As a literary and historical footnote to this observation, one might add that the apocalyptic landscape of Yitzhak Lamdan's poem seemed to be progressively more justified by historical events during the twenty years following the poem's publication; in the quarter-century, however, since the founding of the State, the correspondence between Lamdan's apocalyptic vision and the plane of actual historical events has diminished, while the momentum of the poem's informing myth has continued to grow in Israeli consciousness.) Kedar points out that the very comparison with the Warsaw Ghetto illustrates how questionable Masada is as a model of national will and courage. Unlike the 960 under the command of Ben Ya'ir, the Warsaw Ghetto fighters knew that every one of them faced certain extinction, and yet their response was to fight to the end for their lives, not to seek to deprive the enemy of his satisfaction in that all-too-Roman gesture of self-slaughter.

Kedar rejects the assertion made at a recent armored corps ceremony that because of the heroism of Masada the State of Israel exists today; on the contrary, he argues quite plausibly, the suicides at Masada were an aberration from Jewish values and a historical dead-end, while it was rather Yavneh that was the key to underground survival and ultimate national rebirth. In any case, Kedar, prodded by Golda Meir's words to Stewart Alsop, is most disturbed by the tendency in the invocation of Masada to confuse present with past. He notes as a small but very telling symptom of this tendency that at the burial site of the twenty-five Zealot skeletons—if that is in fact what they are—unearthed by Yigal Yadin, a sign has been placed identical in all respects to the signs used to designate Israeli military cemeteries. One sees that Israel can be not only inspired by the past but also, almost literally, spooked by it.

Such confusions become really dangerous when there is a prospect of their distorting the vision of people in power. To insist on an identity between Israel and Masada is, as Stewart Alsop argues, to adopt policies that may become self-fulfilling prophecies. Kedar comments incisively on this danger:

> It is desirable that a political leader have a sense of history. But he would be better off devoid of all historical sense rather than to cling compulsively to a specific image from the past and act as though it were literally applicable to him and his situation in the present. For in that case reality is not grasped as it actually is but according to its degree of correspondence to preconceptions drawn before

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the fact from the past. . . . In this context, the recollection of Masada is less an inspiring model than an obfuscating obsession, a complex that could pervert moral criteria. For if in fact our situation is as desperate as Masada's, the lines of demarcation between forbidden and permitted begin to waver.

After the Arab debacle of June 1967, after the virtual collapse of the guerrilla movement and the failure of Nasser's war of attrition, and above all after the Russian withdrawal from Egypt in the summer of 1972, one central fact of Middle Eastern politics has become increasingly clear: that Israel is the looming military power in the region. Israel has now amply demonstrated its capability to conduct at will pinpoint strikes against terrorist headquarters within Arab territory, to carry out large-scale retaliatory raids by air, land, and sea; and, barring the possibility of Great Power intervention, one can now hardly doubt Israel's ability to capture Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut in brief order if it ever chose to do so. The growing sophistication, moreover, of arms technology and combat know-how in Israel suggests that the strategic gap between Israel and its neighbors continues to widen. Every day Masada seems less appropriate as an image of Israel, encircled though it is by belligerent states that would, if only they could, drive it into the sea.

In recent months many Israeli political analysts, including some who are far from dovish, have observed that Israeli diplomacy is still conducted with a scared sense of desperation as though the Jewish state were in the stranglehold of superior powers, when in fact Israel has become the commanding power in the area and can afford to negotiate out of a position of strength. I do not mean to say that the fault for the current impasse is solely or even chiefly Israel's, and I am obviously not advocating sweeping unilateral concessions by the Israelis with no guarantees for Israeli security. What I am suggesting, as many observers within Israel itself have argued, is that Israel's position of strength may warrant a greater flexibility and more readiness for diplomatic risk-taking than the Israelis have so far evinced. The present moment, moreover, might be a particularly opportune one for flexibility, before the worldwide oil shortage or a changed configuration of international relations brings the Great Powers to pressure Israel into concessions it might find hard to live with.

I should like to emphasize that the rationale for Israeli diplomatic openness, as this whole argument on the seductiveness of the past implies, must be an accurate, pragmatic perception of present conditions, not a moralistic judgment of Israeli policy based on some abstractly symmetrical notion of "evenhandedness" in international conflict. One can violate factuality just as easily by being high and moral about politics as by being poetic about it.* And finally, let me add that I do not want to attribute too much of the Israeli attitude to the national myth of Masada alone. Clearly, the murderous incursions of Arabs against Jews in Palestine from 1921 onward, the massive trauma of the Holocaust, even the recent diplomatic isolation of Israel in the UN, have contributed to the sense of encirclement and have made Israelis deeply and understandably suspicious of nations that have repeatedly sought their destruction. Nevertheless, I think it would be foolish to disregard the power of literature to generate myth—and in this regard, Josephus is "literature" as much as Lamdan—and the power of myth to affect politics. In this respect as in others, Israel, by virtue of the very anomalies through which it came into being, must live within the tensions of a paradox.

Israel was born out of a national myth. If Herzl and his immediate heirs created the machinery for the national movement through their organizational and diplomatic activity, it was still the new literary versions of the age-old myth of Zion that generated the necessary motor force. The Zionists were in part able to create a heroic present because they had first discovered a heroic past that could serve as a psychological platform for a new mode of Jewish existence, a new relationship to ongoing history. The sense of this past is still, I believe, a positive if problematic energizing force in Israeli consciousness. Without it, Israel's national existence would be trivialized, its sense of purpose undercut. With it, constant vigilance must be exercised so that the features of the present are not distorted to match the contours of the past.

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* Thus, an "Appeal for Peace in the Middle East," signed by a distinguished international group of intellectuals and published in the *New York Review of Books*, June 14, 1973, seems to be pleading for reasonableness from all sides involved, but states the case with such nice symmetry that recent Middle Eastern history begins to look like a moral fiction. The Arab governments (as distinct from the Palestinians) are paid tribute for their "thirst for justice," a thirst they have surely made no visible effort to slake during the last twenty-six years with regard either to Palestinians or to Jews. Israel, on the other hand, is said to have betrayed the ideals of its own pioneers through its "territorial annexations [note the plural] and alliances" (although Israel in fact has no formal alliances, presumably the U.S. is intended). Israel's current relations with the Palestinians are represented, in the devious shorthand of manifestoes, as the bombing of refugee camps. The signatories of the "Appeal," who include, predictably, Hannah Arendt, Noam Chomsky, Paul Jacobs, David Riesman, and I. F. Stone for this country, and, on the European side, figures like Günter Grass, C. P. Snow, and Angus Wilson, would do well to examine ostensibly parallel arguments by Israelis in order to see how one may look at both sides of a political conflict without the dubious aid of a specious moralism. Some of these Israeli views were surveyed by Shlomo Avineri in "Rethinking Israel's Position," COMMENTARY, June 1973.

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# Science versus Justice

*Lionel Abel*

*For Miriam Chiaromonte*

WAS IT later than we thought? But this was precisely what we thought, or thought we had been thinking. In point of purpose—of socialist purpose, if you please—it was late, very late indeed. In point of fact, it was late in 1945—mid-November of that year.

The Second World War had in August come to its ambiguous close with the all's-well-that-ends-badly-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These bombings dismayed American liberals and left-wingers and seemed to confirm the judgment of people like Dwight Macdonald, who had opposed our entrance into the war from the start, holding it could not be won "democratically." There were those, too, who thought the war had not really ended—even as at the present time Noam Chomsky and Joseph Buttinger (and they have arguments) insist that the war in Asia is continuing. But I should like to remark in this connection that those who in 1945 took the view that the Second World War was still going on—in the main, the Trotskyites of both the Workers' party and the Socialist Workers' party—were the very ones who had held at the beginning of the war, that is to say, in 1939, that it had not in fact begun. What looked to political neophytes like a "beginning"—Hitler's invasion of Poland—was, to the Trotskyite sophisticates, merely a "continuation" of the war of 1914-18. But in any case, by the fall of 1945, the war, for most New York City intellectuals, was no longer an issue. The question now was: what would follow it?

Dwight Macdonald, who had resigned from *Partisan Review* and commenced the publication of his own magazine, *Politics*, after a split with Philip Rahv and William Phillips—they supported the American war effort which he opposed* —now organized a series of public lectures, in the main by contributors to *Politics*, on the problems of the postwar period. One of the most interesting of these lectures, and one of the most dramatic in what it revealed about things intellectual in New York City at that time, was the one given by Nicolà Chiaromonte.

How describe the general mood? It was, I think, very like the one which in *The Magic Mountain* overwhelms Hans Castorp at the close of his own private war with tuberculosis in the Berghof Sanitorium at Davos. Thomas Mann writes:

> Everything appeared to have gone permanently and increasingly awry. As though a demonic power—which had indeed for a long time given hints of its malign influence—had suddenly taken control, in a way to induce secret consternation and almost thoughts of flight. The name of the demon was Dumps.

At the end of the war, we were all in the power of the demon Mann has called "The Great God Dumps," or of one very like it, perhaps the Great God Political Dumps. This was, I suggest, because we were so dissatisfied. Those of us who had supported the war had to face the prospect of a peace not good enough to make us forget the killing. And those who had opposed the war had to face a peace less dreadful, and also less illusory, than the one they had prophesied. Anyone who has researched some problem will recall the kind of emotion stimulated by having to hunt down a volume very hard to come by. You make trips to the libraries, then to the bookshops. You persecute your friends. Finally, when hope has quite left you, the volume is obtained—and you do not open it. Only with the sought-after book before you do you fully comprehend that the solution you had wanted will not be found in it. When we went to the lectures organized by *Politics*, it was very much in the spirit of someone looking for ideas yet to be discovered, the discovery of which, he suspects, will not serve his purposes. We did expect something new from Nicolà Chiaromonte.

An anti-fascist exile, Chiaromonte had appeared in New York in 1941 after the fall of Paris, which for some years had been his home. He never propagandized for the Allied side during the Second World War—he used to say that the last "real" cause was that of the Spanish Republic in its war with Franco. He had fought in that

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* Today Macdonald admits that they were right and he was wrong. So *Politics*, as he sees it today, was founded on a political mistake.



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war, alongside André Malraux, about whom he wrote the lucid and revealing article published in the early 50's by *Partisan Review*. What distinguished Chiaromonte at the time in New York intellectual circles was his commitment to politics, together with his refusal to commit himself to Marx—even to those ideas of Marx almost everyone else thought "good." Moreover, there were many notions of Marx, generally accepted by the New York intellectual elite, which Chiaromonte thought positively "bad." What would he have to tell us?

SPEAKING to us from the platform of a shabby hotel on West Broadway, he told us that Marxism was not really, not truly "scientific." Now this disappointed almost everyone and excited nobody, for the charge was not new; we had heard it before. And it was not clear what Marxists had meant by "scientific" in relation to socialism (it is not clear today, either); nor was it clear what Chiaromonte meant. Raymond Aron has recently made the point in *Marxismes Imaginaires* that when Marx called for a socialism that would be "scientific" rather than utopian, he never meant that such socialism was to be "scientific" in the very same sense that physics is. Perhaps. It has been held, on the other hand —this view still has defenders—that the science of socialism was intended to be even more "scientific" than physics is or can be (history, from a Hegelian viewpoint, being more rational than physics). In 1945, though, such distinctions had not been argued with any thoroughness in left-wing circles in New York, and I suppose for most of us the term "scientific," when we applied it to socialism, was intended to have the same sense as when we applied it to physics—although we seldom talked about physics. And it was this sense of the term "scientific," in connection with socialism, that Chiaromonte was asking us to set aside. In recent philosophical discussions, arguments have been advanced *for* "descriptive" as *against* "revisionary" metaphysics. Applying this contemporary terminology to Chiaromonte's talk, we might say that his argument was in *favor* of a "revisionary" and *against* a "descriptive" socialist thought. And he left us with the clear impression that whatever course socialist thinking chose to follow, it could not help but be some kind of metaphysic.

Chiaromonte's second point, that socialism *ought* not to be scientific, but candidly utopian, was the more interesting one, but it was his first point which provoked the audience. When Chiaromonte had done there were questions, a great many questions, of which, of course, I can recall only a few. I do remember that the tone of the questioners was sharp, tense, often inquisitorial. Why, Harold Rosenberg wanted to know, did Chiaromonte criticize Marxism for *not* being scientific when he himself did not *want* it (or socialism) to be scientific? Of course there was something to criticize in Marxism if it was not what Marxists claimed it to be. But I do not remember this to have been Chiaromonte's reply. What he said was this: if Marxism were found satisfactory as science, then it would have to be accepted, and there could be no further arguments about it. As for socialism, he added: "I not only say that it ought to be utopian; I say further that I ought to say this."

I think it was at this point that James T. Farrell, who had thus far contained himself, burst out with a remark that was like a slap. From his seat Farrell shouted: "At least Marxism isn't boring, and you are!" Chiaromonte reddened, but kept his temper, and elegantly apologized for any boredom he may have occasioned others. But Farrell's attack on the speaker unsettled everyone, and finally Mary McCarthy, whose personal friendship for Chiaromonte was quite well known (he was to be the one positive character in her stunning little satire *The Oasis*), took the floor and breathlessly begged the audience—"In the name of humanity!"—to desist from further attacks on the speaker.

James T. Farrell's sally shocked everyone in the hall. Why, it may be asked, had he chosen to be rude? To answer this question I think one must look beyond the incident itself, and even beyond psychology, as far back, maybe, as John Millington Synge's remark that literature would have to become brutal before it could once again become human. (I should say that the opposite is true now: literature will have to become human again before it can again have the right to be brutal.) Farrell had not neglected brutality in both the matter and the manner of his novels, and in *Studs Lonigan*, at least, the results were impressively human. Then, too, there was, at the time, the appeal of Bolshevik rudeness; all the intellectuals present who had been members of left-wing parties had been schooled in name-calling. I must add that in the audience were the two editors of a famous left-wing review, one of whom had shouted at the other during an editorial meeting: "Now don't give me that crap about friendship!"*

Miss McCarthy's appeal was no doubt motivated by a desire to help the speaker. But it amounted to asking the audience not to respond to him at all. And Chiaromonte had not come with the aim of reducing his audience to silence. He had come for an argument, and in an argument, as he well knew, there have to be elements of give and take. Perhaps he could have used a subtler logic to meet the attacks that were made on him.

* The matter under discussion at the review was, of course, not the division of Poland, but how to cut up the article of a "friend."

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This Miss McCarthy was unable to supply. All she accomplished was to make Chiaromonte seem weaker (for the moment) than in fact he was, and this by exhibiting the depth and force of her concern for him. Her request was not followed—it simply cancelled out whatever sense of outrage had been felt at Farrell's sally, after which the audience got back to what most interested it, namely attacking Chiaromonte.

I THINK it fair to say that while there was not a single person, with the exception of Dwight Macdonald, in the hall that night, who agreed with Chiaromonte, on the other hand there was hardly a person present whose views since 1945 have not shifted toward the position which Chiaromonte took. Why is this? During the last ten years, the main emphasis of the critics of American foreign policy has been precisely moral rather than scientific, and many of those who objected in 1945 to what Chiaromonte said, had by the 60's, scrapped the "scientific" criticism of American capitalism for a moral criticism of the American state, especially for its policies in Southeast Asia. Incidentally, something very similar had happened in France during the struggle against the Algerian war. There, too, the moral criticism of French military policy in Algeria, voiced often by writers, moralists, and priests, replaced the old class analysis of French imperialism in which "scientific" Marxism had specialized.

Now I am not suggesting that the movement which in this country called itself the New Left began with the speech delivered by Chiaromonte on that November night in 1945. As a matter of fact, years later, when the New Left had put in its appearance, Chiaromonte was rather unsympathetic to it, though he did admit to a sympathy and liking for the writings of Norman Mailer. But I think it interesting to note right here that a good many of the important literary and intellectual productions of the late 40's anticipated, predicted, or called for, something very like the New Left. Take, for example, Anouilh's play *Antigone*, produced in 1943 in Paris, under the German occupation. In this reworking of Sophocles's masterpiece, the novelty Anouilh introduced was to strengthen the logic of Creon's argument in his confrontation with Antigone, and to weaken hers. If, in Sophocles's play, Antigone has somewhat the better argument than her antagonist, in Anouilh's play the very reverse is the case. A member of the French Resistance who had not liked the play told me in 1948, "It was offensive to me as a Resistance fighter. It made me feel that one had to be illogical, even crazy, to take up arms against the occupiers." Perhaps it is stretching things a bit to say that the politics of Anouilh's *Antigone* were not so unlike the politics which in his speech Chiaromonte outlined for socialists. Who could deny the moral rightness of Antigone in burying her brother? Who could assert that the justification she gives (in Anouilh) for her action is a completely clear one? I have been struck by the continued interest shown in Anouilh's play over the years despite its many (some serious) faults. One reason for this interest may be the prophetic anticipation by the playwright, if we may judge him by his heroine, of the mood which was to grip so many intellectuals some years later, and perhaps even more in this country than in France.

But to make understandable the dislike felt by Chiaromonte's audience for the candidly anti-scientific view he was asking them to support, I shall have to describe what might be called the intellectual atmospherics of the period. Certainly there were very few—if any—scientists among the writers and the intellectuals present. But I think it can be stated that for the most part here were people who believed in science, or at the very least were not deeply disturbed by doubts of it. To put it simply, science had an intellectual prestige it just does not have today. Since the 40's, even laymen have become aware of the very great difficulty, and perhaps impossibility, of proving any kind of statement. For Karl Popper and his disciples no positive statements can be said to be proved, and the difference between scientific statements and non-scientific statements is simply that the former have been so put that it is possible to show them to be false. For some contemporary thinkers, it is even impossible to prove that any statement is false. As the pragmatist W. V. Quine has it: "Any statement can be held true, come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments. . . ."

Very few of us in 1945 could have imagined a state of intellectual affairs in which the evidence produced by Galileo for his hypothesis by means of the telescope he had fashioned, but not invented, could be used *against* his hypothesis. But it is said now (by Imre Lacatos) that the evidence obtained through his telescope was in fact determined by Galileo's theory, and any observations properly supporting that theory would have to be independent of it. But Galileo's telescope was a part of his theory. And we could not have imagined a cavalier judgment of science like the following by Paul Feyerabend, who is not a man of letters, but a philosopher of science:

> It is good to be constantly reminded of the fact that science as we know it today is not inescapable and that we may construct a world in which it plays no role whatever (such a world, I venture to suggest, would be more pleasant than the world we live in today).

Few in Chiaromonte's audience had any such doubts about the "pleasantness" or validity of

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science. On the other hand, the issue between Chiaromonte and those who were not doubtful of the sciences was not, in fact, a purely intellectual issue, but to a very large degree a moral one. I think most of those who heard Chiaromonte that night and who thought of themselves as believers in science also thought that it was moral to believe in science, and moral to try to be scientific in whatever one asserted. "What are we to be, if we are not to be scientific?" members of Chiaromonte's audience, practically none of whom were scientists, asked themselves. And Chiaromonte for his part was asking them to be something other than that. They thought he was asking them to dream, and if they were going to dream, why couldn't they dream of being scientists?

For his part, Chiaromonte's moral impulse expressed itself in the need to represent that which we desire but which is not present, that for which there is no evidence other than our will to cause it to be; utopia, for him, was the idealization of social life, comparable to the idealization of nature in a Cézanne landscape. To be sure, there was a natural kind of evidence for Cézanne's landscapes. There was what he called his *petite sensation*. Perhaps Chiaromonte had similarly a *petite sensation*, or something comparable to it, of a better social order. The experience of friendship, for example, may have been his model of what social life might be, and ought to be.

And here I must distinguish what Chiaromonte meant by friendship from what Chiaromonte's friend André Malraux must have meant by the term "virile fraternity," to which he gave a good deal of what I think it perfectly fair to call publicity. "Virile fraternity" certainly sounds like a slogan, and in fact was employed as a slogan by Malraux. It was the promise that comrades-in-arms would feel warmly toward each other in situations of danger, warmly enough not to notice just what cause had joined them. But by friendship, I think, Chiaromonte meant a small-scale model for any social unity that was in fact worth fighting for. And the term "friendship" had no semblance of a slogan in his usage of it. Now in Chiaromonte's audience that night there were persons united with others in bonds of "virile fraternity." Also, there were friends. And one of those whom Chiaromonte himself thought of as a friend was the American novelist James T. Farrell, who had challenged him so sharply from the floor.

Some intellectuals rely on their feelings for logic, others on their command of fact. Chiaromonte, while scholarly, was neither a logician nor an academic, and I think what gave one confidence in his judgment was this personal quality: he meant what he said. And there was a Roman soberness in his appearance and manner that made him particularly appealing. Stockily built, with good shoulders, rather like Sartre's, he had large and rather soft brown eyes that looked out of a broad, unwrinkled face with a glance that seemed never to expect, or indeed to have met with, any kind of accusation. I must add that his face was further ennobled by the kind of classical nose which one can still find among the good-looking of southern France, Italy, and Greece, and for which there is no better qualifier than the one supplied by a modern poet (Durrell? Carpentakis?) who has called such noses "aimed."

The reader may wonder: if Chiaromonte was so attractive, why did he antagonize rather than persuade his audience? I think I have already explained this in part by the commitment of his audience to science, to a socialism conceived as scientific. But this is only a partial explanation. And the other part is to be found in a certain weakness in Chiaromonte's presentation of his ideas. I have ventured to compare Chiaromonte's experience of friendship to the experience Cézanne referred to as his *petite sensation*. But Cézanne did not ask the viewers of his landscapes to share the *petite sensation* that was his. He did not ask them to have confidence in his vision from the fact that he himself had such confidence. For him there was the *petite sensation*, for the viewer there was its objectification in his paintings. Now I think Chiaromonte's weakness lay in his inability somehow to objectify in some intellectual or artistic work the *petite sensation* that served him as a model for what social relations should be. And because he was unable to transform this experience into some objective work, he was always reduced to asking his hearers or readers to share it with him. And this, without having provided them with any sufficient incentive for so doing.

One very clear instance of this comes to mind. Chiaromonte, who went regularly to the movies —he used to say, to justify his habit, "When you live in big cities you go to the movies"—was resolutely opposed to regarding films as works of art. And he would not yield on this judgment no matter what argument one gave. "What about Chaplin?" I remember asking him. "What about *City Lights*?" which in fact he adored. But he would not yield on this film, either. For him it was not a work of art. Those who read the magazine *Instead*, which I edited with the painter Matta some twenty-odd years ago, may recall the article by Chiaromonte attacking films as works of art which I published, I believe, together with a reply by Parker Tyler. Now the argument Chiaromonte gave in that essay against regarding films as art works could hardly convince anyone. The argument would hold for any stage play not written in verse, and would require us to think that

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Ibsen, Chekhov, Pirandello, and Shaw are no more artistic than Antonioni or John Ford. So Chiaromonte's argument was inadequate. But yet his judgment may very well have been right. If we think of what films have become, what they represent in the experience of people in today's cities, it is certainly something altogether different from what poetry, the theater, opera, and the visual arts meant in times past. I have no doubt that Chiaromonte was quite right to trust his *petite sensation*. Very few intellectuals have any such model in forming their judgments. On the other hand, he was not able to persuade many of the rightness of his views.

MUCH the same point about film was made by Walter Benjamin in his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Benjamin equated the modern film with the modern photographic process for reproducing on a mass scale masterpieces of visual art. The result of both techniques—that of the film and that of the reproduction of paintings—would be, Benjamin predicted, the destruction of the "aura" that had prior to now shielded from vulgar contact and inspection the whole art of the past. So for Benjamin the film was not only not art; it was anti-artistic in essence.* And anti-artistic in essence, too, was the reproduction of paintings. Benjamin, however, was *in favor* of the film and *in favor* of the mechanical reproduction of paintings, for he saw in these techniques a means of weakening the social power of the cultivated elite to which he himself belonged. To be completely fair to Benjamin, it was only because this friend of Brecht looked forward to a revolutionary transformation of society that he could see a positive side to the making of films and mechanical reproductions. Chiaromonte, while he also looked forward to a revolutionary transformation of society, was *not* interested in destroying the social power of whatever elite existed that was still cultivated. So he was *against* films and *against* mechanical reproductions. But however one judges films, Benjamin's essay is, in a way, a masterpiece. His vote *in favor* of the film and of the reproduction of paintings we are free to disregard. The genius of his essay was in the connection he traced between the film industry and the reproduction of paintings, and in the formulation of the injurious effect of both films and reproductions on the "aura" of art works. So if Chiaromonte's judgment of the film was more prophetic, yet what he had to say about films was less interesting.

And I think I must make a similar judgment of the speech Chiaromonte delivered that night in 1945. It appeared under the title, "On the Kind of Socialism Called Scientific" in *Politics*, February 1946. Reading the article today, we would find much in it about Marxism which is dated. But even in the criticisms which are dated there are still a number of real hits: "And, even more remarkable, those . . . who are tormented by all kinds of misgivings about Marx and his disciples, and even speak of giving up 'Marxist dogmatism,' usually end up by insisting that 'Marxism is however essentially right,' or, what amounts to the same thing, by actually making use of essentially Marxist notions, without, however, using them consistently. . . . In fact, both what is serious in their doubts and what is Marxist in their thoughts, is nullified by their neither sticking to Marxism and striving to perfect it, if really Marxism is 'essentially right,' nor carrying through their doubt, so as to reach some other, firmer ground." Now we all know people whom these remarks take off rather perfectly.

On the other hand, Chiaromonte's effort to reduce the so-called "scientific" side of Marxism to a concealed and vestigial Hegelianism seems to me biased, dated, and even wrong-headed. I think it was dated even at the time that Chiaromonte gave his speech, for Sidney Hook had already distinguished Marxist dialectic, which embraced society and history, from Hegel's dialectic, which also embraced nature. And in recent years the French Marxist, Louis Althusser, has gone even further in separating Marx from Hegel, and much more concretely than either Hook or Chiaromonte may have thought possible in 1945. Althusser has shown very successfully, I think, that while Hegel and Marx both think in terms of "totalities," what they mean by "totality" is very different. Althusser writes: "Surprising as it may seem to those who know Hegel only in Marx's judgment of him, in his theory of society Hegel is not the inverse of Marx. The 'spiritual' principle that constitutes the internal unity of the Hegelian historical totality cannot be assimilated at all to the one that Marx himeslf features in the form of the 'determination in the last instance by the economy.' The inverse principle —determination in the last instance by the state, or by philosophy—is not to be found in Hegel." I think on this point Althusser is quite correct and we ought to be grateful to him for the clear thinking behind this and a number of other distinctions he has made between Hegel's views and those of Marx. The trouble with these distinctions of Althusser, I must remark in passing, is that while they seem clear and apt enough when so stated as to indicate differences in the *social* theories of Hegel and Marx, they become altogether unclear in Althusser's handling when stated as to indicate an important *philosophical* difference between Hegel and Marx—which is

* One of the anti-artistic effects of film has been the idea that film criticism is in some ways superior to or more interesting than literary and dramatic criticism. This idea has all the qualifications of a perfect platitude. It is often repeated, widely believed, and quite false.

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Althusser's main purpose in bringing up these distinctions.*

But the main idea expressed by Chiaromonte in his lecture and the very idea felt to be most provocative and disturbing by his audience, composed mainly of intellectuals, is contained in the following remarks on justice:

> Against the kind of socialism called "scientific," the contention is raised that no socialist idea or consistent line of action is conceivable if not based on the *idea of justice*, the very same idea at which Marx, Engels, and all their realistic disciples, including the idealist Rosa Luxemburg, so consistently jeered.
>
> In other words, to quote a sentence which the same Rosa Luxemburg meant as annihilating sarcasm: "We thus . . . return to the principle of justice, to the old hobby-horse on which the reformers of the earth have rocked for ages, for lack of surer means of historic transportation. We return to that lamentable Rosinante on which the Don Quixotes of history have galloped toward the great reform of the earth, always to come home with their eyes blackened."

Against such thoughtless scoffing the present writer maintains that, as long as human reason has any relevance to human affairs, we do not need any "surer means of historic transportation" than consistent ideas consistently and uncompromisingly believed, and exposed to the test of reason and experience. That one might "always come home with one's eyes blackened," or not come home at all, will not be considered a deterrent, and not ridiculous in the least. It will be the normal price to pay for having firmly willed one thing, and for having refused to calculate what substantial crumbs one might steal from the dubious feast of history by shifting one's will according to expediency. On the other hand, it might indeed look ridiculous to come home with blackened eyes after having blatantly proclaimed that only a march to victory in a "sure means of historic transportation" is worthy of our efforts.

There is always a certain amount of conversation while a lecture is going on, but the remarks on justice I have cited were made by Chiaromonte to a completely hushed audience whose silence signaled the ensuing storm. Why were people so disturbed? For one thing, Rosa Luxemburg was probably the revolutionary figure members of Chiaromonte's audience were the least willing to criticize. Her revolutionary credentials were unquestionable, her humanity was attested to by the beauty of her sentiments, also by her deeds. All this was in the minds of Chiaromonte's auditors, and made them want to defend her against his criticism. Many felt if they could not defend *her*, how could they defend Lenin, Trotsky, or themselves, for that matter? But there was something else, too. If we look at that statement of Rosa Luxemburg once again, we must be struck by this fact: it has lost all appeal between the time Chiaromonte cited it and the present, while it had suffered not at all during the period between 1899, when first expressed (in a polemic against Eduard Bernstein) and when referred to in mid-November 1945. I think very few audiences of intellectuals would object today to the kind of criticism made by Chiaromonte of Rosa Luxemburg's disparagement of justice. And think of what the expression of such a criticism of Rosa Luxemburg would mean nowadays if stated in the Soviet Union before an audience of Russian intellectuals! Today there would be an immediate disposition to think Chiaromonte correct and Rosa Luxemburg in error, and I believe this would hold true even for many of those intellectuals who, hearing Chiaromonte out that night, were so disturbed by what he said.

As I already noted, during the last ten years the main criticism of American foreign and domestic policies has been made by those who

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* In Althusser's book of essays, *Lenin and Philosophy*, he replies to a question in an interview conducted by Maria Antonietta Macciocchi, as follows: "Marx founded a new science: the science of history. Let me use an image. The sciences we are familiar with have been installed in a number of great 'continents.' Before Marx, two such continents had been opened up to scientific knowledge: the continent of mathematics and the continent of physics. The first by the Greeks (Thales), the second by Galileo. Marx opened up a third continent to scientific knowledge: the continent of history.

"The opening up of this new continent has induced a revolution in philosophy. That is a law: philosophy is always linked to the sciences. Philosophy was born (with Plato) at the opening up of the continent of mathematics. It was transformed (with Descartes) by the opening up of the continent of physics. Today it is being revolutionized by the opening up of the continent of history by Marx. This revolution is called 'Dialectical Materialism.'"

I find these notions of Althusser very self-serving. If Marx really made possible, and for the first time, a true science of history, why should Althusser's efforts to indicate this acquisition be expressed in statements that are surely distortions of the history of philosophy? Did philosophy really begin with Plato? Was then Socrates, so prominent in Plato's dialogues, not a philosopher? Apparently not, for mathematics is hardly stressed by Socrates, and to admit this would require Althusser to give up his notion that philosophy begins with a discovery in one of the sciences. As for Descartes, was not his inspiration linked more closely to mathematics than to physics? Berkeley, Althusser does not mention at all, for Berkeley could hardly be shown to be indebted to Newton, against whom he argued successfully. Kant is not mentioned, who was indebted to Newton for that part of his philosophy which made Bertrand Russell call him a misfortune, and which we avoid discussing today. And finally, Hegel is not mentioned. Hegel, who made the historical more important than the mathematical, and for the first time in the history of philosophy. But to have mentioned Hegel would have been to admit that science can take its cue from philosophy, and Althusser is determined to assert the contrary.

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were morally appalled by such policies, and the same must be said for the criticisms made of Soviet policies by Soviet citizens, like Andrei Sakharov. These have been fundamentally moral, and based on an appeal to justice. No really significant criticism of Russian policy has been voiced which has founded itself on the kind of "scientific" calculation dear to Marxist-Leninists, or Bolshevik-Leninists, or whatever such people nowadays call themselves. The scientific criticism of Soviet policy from a standpoint which shares the moral perspectives of the Russian bureaucracy is interesting to no one. The moral criticism of Soviet policies is interesting to everybody, and most especially to the victims of Marxism-Leninism, the citizens of the Soviet Union.

Certainly Chiaromonte's position, as we scan it today, was clearly stated. But the issue between him and his audience on that night in 1945 was by no means clearly drawn. Chiaromonte's position was for what might be called a "science-free" political outlook based on the idea of justice; and I think the position taken generally by his audience was in favor of a value-free politics based on what they took to be "Marxist science." And the audience, as I suggested, had a moral commitment to a value-free politics, even as Chiaromonte had a moral commitment to a politics I think it perfectly fair to describe as "science-free." I must add here that (many years later) Chiaromonte supported Leo Strauss in his attack on the "value-free" sociology of Max Weber, an attack which during the 60's was repeated, with much less finesse, by Herbert Marcuse at the sociology conference in Berlin. Marcuse directed his fire at the foremost contemporary defender of Weberian sociology, Talcott Parsons. Now the foremost exponent of a value-free Marxism, the Communist and anti-humanist, Louis Althusser, was called by the late George Lichtheim "the Talcott Parsons of Marxism." So the debate is still with us.

Is it easier to decide the issue today than it was on that night in 1945? Is it possible to say today who was more in the right, who more in the wrong, Chiaromonte or those who disputed with him? As I've already indicated, the prestige of science has seriously declined since 1945. Karl Popper, who is right to protest that he never called science an "illusion," yet tells us in his latest book, *Objective Knowledge:*

> Although we have no criterion of truth, and no means of being even quite sure of the falsity of a theory, it is easier to find out that a theory is false than to find out that it is true. . . . We have even good reason to think that most of our theories—even our best theories—are, strictly speaking, false; for they oversimplify or idealize the facts.

Evidently confidence in the truth-finding character of science, taken in the strictest sense, has waned. Correspondingly, there has developed a sense of just what we have to sacrifice in order to have science at all. For example, the French philosopher of science, Michel Serres, author of the recently issued and excellent *Le Système de Leibniz,* tells us that science developed by liberating the *how* from the *why*. If we take this as a correct interpretation of what has been happening in natural science since the formulations of 18th-century mechanics, and as an indication of the meaning of science taken as a whole, and if then, with this meaning in mind, we look at the debate between Chiaromonte and those who opposed him that night in 1945, we arrive at this judgment: it was Chiaromonte who was defending the *why* of socialism against an audience committed to its *how*. Cannot the two be joined? But Serres tells us that science, as we have understood it, is an activity in which the *why* is eliminated. He is thinking of physics, of course, not of the "science" of arriving at socialism; but if we look around the contemporary world, at wherever an effort was made to arrive at socialism through Marxist science, we see, too, that the *why* of socialism was in every instance eliminated, always, we were told, for greater success in arriving at socialism.

Thus it is that most of the members of that audience which disputed with Chiaromonte have moved intellectually during the intervening years to a position if not identical with, yet much closer to the one he, with no air of prophecy, took that night. If there was a weakness, political or intellectual, in the point of view he outlined, I think it was of the same sort that I have already indicated about his judgment of film. He spoke of justice, of the idea of justice, and of its importance to a socialist outlook. But he was unable to say with any great clarity what he meant by "justice." Perhaps he should be commended for his obstinacy in holding to what I have called his *petite sensation,* his model of what he took to be the good in social life. This may sound strange, but it is, I think, important in our intellectual history; it was not at all easy for an American intellectual to be really in favor of justice in 1945. Probably this was true in England, also. G. E. M. Anscombe told us as late as 1958 that English academic moral philosophy has, since Sidgewick, endorsed injustice. In her essay, "Modern Moral Philosophy," Miss Anscombe writes:

> . . . consider that every one of the best known English academic moral philosophers has put out a philosophy according to which, e.g., it is not possible to hold that it cannot be right to

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kill the innocent as a means to any end whatsoever, and that someone who thinks otherwise is in error.*

No, Chiaromonte was not able to validate the importance which justice had for him. But sometimes one man's insight may be validated by another. I am thinking in this instance of John Rawls's recently issued *A Theory of Justice,* which has already achieved the status of a classic. It is the first modern theoretical work which attributes social and political importance to a particular virtue, the sense of justice. To be sure there is a foundation for this view in what is known as classical political theory. But there is no foundation for such a view in modern theory. And Rawls has done nothing less than provide this, basing his analysis not on Plato and on Aristotle but on Rousseau and on Kant.† Nothing produced by any Marxist, Leninist, Deutscherite, or Maoist comes anywhere near it as an aid to understanding what is necessary for the good in social life. I think this does prove something.

* I would like to call attention to Miss Anscombe's phrase, "any end whatsoever." She is not saying, as some have claimed, that it is wrong to kill one innocent person to save the whole human race. There are some, though, who would argue that it is *right* to kill one innocent person to save the whole human race. Against them we can argue the artificiality of this instance. I cannot conceive of any circumstances, however odd, in which the safety of the whole human race could depend on the killing of an innocent person. And I might add that here is indeed an argument for the proposition that life is worth living (a proposition often hard to defend): surely it is good that it is so difficult to conceive of any real circumstance in which humanity requires the sacrifice of someone innocent.

† It may be asked, but is not Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* a scientific work? Certainly it is a reasonable one, but it is not part of what is known as scientific philosophy or philosophy of science. Whatever Rawls says about justice is quite independent of any proposition we can form or have formed about the sciences.


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# The Body Politic

## *A Story*

Steve Brynes

*To the person who thinks with his head life is a comedy.*

—Henry Miller

### *Feedback*

"So you've sold out," she said severely, biting down on a liverwurst sandwich while I poured a glass of domestic Chablis under the Virginia sky.

"You have to eat to live." But this small sarcasm was ignored.

"If you could only realize the immorality of what you're doing. No, I don't mean you're intentionally wicked—but like most Americans you're a sleepwalker, just not seeing."

"Not seeing what?"

"Well, for example, this terrible place you're living in. I agree that people shouldn't be moved around like chesspieces, and that urban renewal often creates more problems than it solves, but you're intelligent, you've been to college, and you *must know better.*"

"It's a complicated story," I apologized.

In April of 1968 I descended into the bowels of the American economy. More precisely, one of many bowels, pipes, tubes, canals, ducts, etc. Once an economist, now I couldn't count them all, let alone match up fittings.

I bought a small trailer and lived by myself in a trailer park sandwiched between a freeway overpass and the city of Alexandria garbage dump. There were eight other trailers in the park, and twenty-six people, the only inhabitants of a reclaimed swamp known locally, and in the bastard-Colonial style of the Old Dominion, as Difficult Run.

Unlike the average residential neighborhood, it had a life of its own. There was *movement,* as trailer trucks roared southward steadily through the night, and *waste,* an acrid smell of wet smoldering cardboard and rubber drifting gloomily over the landscape.

I had begun a new job as a machinist, rebuilding diesel engines, and spent the evening assembling data for my embryonic invention: a type of turbine (powered by an inert gas) for automobiles. Like a diligent packrat, I searched the Library of Congress and the Patent Office for design concepts, heat exchange rates, coefficients of expansion, properties of lubricants, etc.—winnowing out and streamlining down toward a final synthesis.

Once the design was finished, I would construct the first crude model myself, for only this could make it physically and mentally my own. I had been compartmentalized and specialized for so long in my old job that I felt I had to do everything myself.

A few years before, I had read in the literature of management an article on "Modern Warehousing Techniques" which matched the uneasy eclecticism of my own mental processes perfectly. It stressed: "Most importantly, pattern recognition, the ability to see systems of organization and revise them to your purposes."

Though uncertain as to the results of this backyard inventing, I knew I was putting on intellectual muscle fast. Like an amateur bodybuilder before the mirror, I could glimpse, from time to time, what I was looking for:

> It is a primary aim of industrial cybernetics to harness this ability of a system to teach itself optimum behavior. To do it, however, we must know how to design the system in the first place as a machine-for-teaching-itself. There must be exactly the right flow of information in the right places; rich interconnectivity; facilities for the growth of feedbacks . . . and so on.
>
> —*Cybernetics and Management,* Stafford Beer

I even started a garden that summer—after years of living in furnished rooms—planting carrots, tomatoes, sweet corn, and sunflowers in a neat little 20-by-20-foot plot.

My neighbors, all blue-collar workers from small Southern towns with obscure names, were shy and suspicious, saying little except to comment that I "looked educated." I kept a solemn face and nodded unhappily. A few were interested in my garden, which they claimed would never grow "in the hard soil up here."

But I diligently searched for horse and cow manure among the disappearing farms at the edge of the suburbs and prepared a mulch from

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grass clippings. The sunflowers bloomed where feces had fallen, the tomatoes and carrots flourished, though my corn was eaten up by worms.

My problems were social ones.

In the beginning, I put on a clean shirt in the evenings and sat in workmen's bars trying to pick up girls. When this failed, I resumed my old habits and, with coat, tie, and shave, drove across the Potomac to Georgetown and the Friday-night parties of the Young Republicans and the Saturday-night parties of the Young Democrats.

Here, finding either sex or companionship became an uphill struggle. The girls were somewhat shopworn, fitfully alternating between guilt and aggressiveness; they were either divorced or career girls for whom independence was turning sour. My 1949 Cadillac with the back seat missing did not promise security in an unstable world. Once I even rented a car and somehow began talking unhappily about a "serious relationship" to a girl who took me seriously. She only made me feel uncomfortable.

During my first few weeks at the machine shop, I had indulged my taste for symbolism—wearing a white sports shirt with a blue collar, then a chambray work shirt with a white collar sewn on. But no one ever noticed, and finally I threw both shirts away.

A day or so after I had let the serious girl off for the last time ("What's so funny?" she kept asking tediously) and returned the car to the rental agency, I became extremely depressed.

"The brain is like a glass of milk," I wrote in my journal, "it curdles when left too long outside."

Exactly what this meant I didn't know, but it seemed to describe my feelings. In moods like these, time stretches and unravels. Separate events blur into their backgrounds. The simplest, most mechanical acts become terribly laborious, and I can scarcely read or think at all.

When Thursday night rolled around, I knew that I could not finish out the week. I called in sick the next morning and slept most of the day.

By evening I felt better and began reading from an anthology of English and American poetry and drinking red wine from a gallon jug. My own private, sad little party.

What I like about poetry is that I can *manipulate* it, almost like a private, closed-circuit television system. I read a line at random and watched the shape form in my mind. Then it blurred and dissolved. Again, more wine, another line, another image.

"There will be time to murder and create," Mr. Eliot snapped briskly.

"I can't create," I complained.

But a suitable victim squatted about a quarter-mile away.

It was the Sign of the Burgermaster, Inc. ("Your Highway Host From Coast to Coast"), the corporate trademark of a chain of drive-in restaurants, a pudgy, 12-foot hermaphrodite of plastic and neon—sausage-curl wig, knee breeches, frock coat and ruffles, gobbling an overloaded hamburger—it flashed on and off twenty-four hours a day, squatting obscenely with legs spread far apart as if inviting rape by either sex.

I cleaned and oiled my gun the next day, a scope-sighted 30-caliber bolt-action given to me as a present for graduating from high school, and very early Monday morning, before the sun rose, walked through the tall grass around the edge of the dump and sighted it from a junked car which served as a shooting platform.

I estimated the distance at more than 300 yards, adjusted the cross-hairs to maximum range and adjusted myself to the three-seconds-on, three-off blinking rhythm of the sign and fired.

Too low—though this was only guesswork. I slid the bolt back, lifted the muzzle a notch and fired again, and a third time. The sign stayed dark. Then I hid the gun under the broken back seat of the car and took a bus to work.

That evening workmen were bolting a matching piece of plastic on the sign's crotch, and the police were asking questions.

"You know anything about this?" an elderly gray-haired cop was asking "Young Sam," as the trailer people called him, the only teen-ager in the park. Sam was a pale, short skinny boy with a blond ducktail combed back in the style of the 50's, one of the anachronisms of that place I could never understand.

"No sir!" he piped up shrilly. "Nobody around here did it! Ask them niggers 'cross the river!"

"Son, we're askin' everybody," the cop reproved tiredly.

But finally they left empty-handed, not even finding the gun. My relief was unexpectedly huge, and I lay awake most of the night giggling and chortling like a disturbed adolescent. I was a free man again—or so it seemed.

ABOUT a month and a half later, Sam and his grandfather, a leathery, shambling old man who worked as a night watchman somewhere in Alexandria, came to visit me early one evening. It was the middle of August, and I was sitting inside my trailer sweating over the design of turbine rotors.

"We'd like a talk with you," the grandfather announced, as Sam stood by solemnly. "It's important," he added, seeing my reluctance.

So I unfolded my Sears Roebuck lawn chairs and set them up outside. The old man moved his chair almost as close to mine as possible and sat down.

"We were goin' home anyway," he began, "but I hate bein' pushed." He hawked and spat, then rambled on about his life in Alabama, how he had come North as a carpenter in the 50's, how arthritis had crippled his hands, forcing him to

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become a night watchman, and how he had adopted Sam after the boy's mother had run away.

Finally he came to the point, producing with a flourish a copy of the Alexandria newspaper. "Now you read," he said, waving it under my nose.

"VANDALISM, GARBAGE GLUT TO FORCE OUT TRAILER RESIDENTS," the headline proclaimed. I laughed out of reflex, and then—while Sam and his grandfather scowled in unison—read the rest of the story.

"An unfortunate act of vandalism to an Alexandria drive-in restaurant," the article ran, "has led the City Council part of the way to evicting nine trailers apparently occupying city property illegally. The additional land will be used for much needed expansion of the dump, which has been severely overloaded in recent years.

"Since World War II, trailers have used city-owned land free of charge while acquiring water, electricity, and postal service," it continued. "Embarrassed officials declined comment when asked whether permits had been granted and whether residents paid city taxes."

"What can be done?"

"You might know." This was stated as fact.

"Why me?" I pushed my chair back a little in an effort to disengage.

"You used to work for the government," he said, clawing futilely at a cellophane-wrapped plug of tobacco. Then Sam, who sat silently hanging on every word, opened it for him.

"I don't like to be forced," I said finally, deeply sorry I had ever told him about myself.

His eyes narrowed with contempt as the plug settled in his cheek. "You stupid intellectual," he was really saying, *"what else do you want besides self-interest?* Just do your job."

I couldn't answer that question. I owed money on both the Cadillac (which had needed a new engine, transmission, and paint job) and the trailer. I was in no shape to move—but maybe in five or six months.

"I'll see what can be done." It was the time-honored closer, and they went quickly with two solemn handshakes.

"In six months," I promised myself, "I'll tell them all to go to hell."

I BEGAN looking for a part-time job to help pay off my bills—while my mind kept circling carefully around the problem, like a boxer, I imagined, feinting and shifting.

I first visited the Department of Property Inspection and Tax Assessment. Tired clerks with faces worn like old furniture. I could sense the situation before I'd said a word. The newspaper story had frightened them, and they were afraid to talk about the trailers.

The Mayor and most of the City Council were supposed to be on vacation. So I stormed upstairs to Central Records and, with the pretext of checking title deeds, began searching through ordinances and minutes of meetings.

But it wasn't until driving home that evening that I grasped a workable idea. The area had never been zoned for private homes, yet there were a few scattered references in the minutes to residential use of the trailer park. If anyone could be put on the spot, it was the Zoning Commissioner, a powerful bureaucrat of long tenure and an *ex officio* member of the council.

The next morning, however, he too refused to see me after a secretary had relayed my identity and mission.

But now there was an opening. I wrote a long, carefully-worded letter pointing out in oblique bureaucratic language the "problem" that might be left on his doorstep as the result of "oversights," hinted at "adjustments," and left my work telephone number.

I read it over with smug self-congratulation, and, coasting on ego now, wrote another letter, this time complaining of the impending indignity of forced eviction, "the callous disregard for human beings," and "bureaucratic indifference or harassment." A copy went to each of the three local newspapers.

Sure enough. A week later came a call from the bureaucrat's secretary, all arrogance and efficiency, saying he would visit the park at 10 A.M., September 10, to "inspect the premises."

"No, no other time is satisfactory," she said. "Thank you."

"Bitch!" I shouted at the cylinder block I was drilling and strapped my goggles back on. But after ten minutes the telephone rang again. It was Washington's liberal newspaper.

My letter had been bucked down through the hierarchy to some girl who talked as though she had just graduated from carrying coffee. "I don't know much about urban renewal, Mr. Bentham, but I am quite concerned about the human interest side of the story."

"You'll do just fine." I was beginning to feel good-humored again. "Could you come at ten in the morning, September 10? The Zoning Commissioner of Alexandria will be there."

"Oh, that sounds wonderful," she said, "just let me check my calendar. . . . Yes, I can make it."

"Then your story will come straight from the horse's mouth." She didn't laugh, and there was an awkward pause.

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't tell you, did I?" She seemed suddenly on the edge of flirtation. "Well, it's Webster—Marjorie Webster."

"Are you related to the dictionary-maker or the politician?" I had to find out whether she was intelligent.

"My grandmother says we're related—very distantly—to Daniel Webster."

"No kidding. I'm a big fan of his—especially of the writings on the need for political unity. Have you read them?"

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"Are you a teacher?" she countered suspiciously. Then, "No, I read something in high school once, but I've forgotten the name."

"I'm not a teacher."

"I see. How interesting. Well, it will be nice to see you on the 10th."

"Likewise, I'm sure. Goodbye."

I SHOULD give Sam some credit—he did help me clean up the park that morning while the others faded away rapidly on some excuse or other. We cut down weeds and picked up litter until everything looked fairly clean, and then I sent him on his way. I was left alone with nine tin houses on wheels, some struggling crabgrass, and the "Wallace for President—'68" stickers that Sam had pasted on every trailer but mine.

I had considered peeling them off, but finally concluded that they could possibly help influence the Zoning Commissioner. Although the day was becoming hot, I wore a brown sports jacket over a white short-sleeved shirt—a deliberately ambiguous choice—and no tie.

He arrived almost precisely on time, driving down the dusty dirt road from the freeway to the dump in a dark green 1950 Plymouth sport coupe with a heavily repainted look. An old-school Southern politician? I remembered that *Time* magazine had once quoted the late Harry Byrd, Sr. as saying that he used to drive his Chevys until they "plumb wore out."

He was a tall, narrow-shouldered man with rimless glasses, of willowy build but with a slight pot, and he was wearing slacks and a shirt like mine.

"I'm the Zoning Commissioner," he said brusquely, ignoring my proffered handshake and punctuating his sentence with a slam of the car door.

"I'm Jerry Bentham. Would you—"

"Look, I'm a busy man." He walked past me and began inspecting the first trailer, mumbling something about "transients."

"I asked for—"

"If the city says move, you have to move." And then, with the abrupt change of pace that politicians accomplish so easily, "How much time do you need?"

"Six months."

"Six months!" He was genuinely surprised. "It takes this Council six months to put paper in the Jiffy Johns. Do you know what you're doing?"

"I guess not."

"Well, you seem like a nice kid so let me give you some advice." He turned back toward his car, got in and started the engine. "You keep this place nice and neat and call the Health Inspector and ask him to come by and look around. He can't turn you down—that's the law. 'Course, if you're getting out in six months—it doesn't matter. Six months . . . horseshit!" He gunned the accelerator, the old car bucked and jumped, and with what little speed it could muster, went charging up the road.

The whole transaction had taken around five minutes.

Disgusted at my political ineptitude, I dragged out a lawn chair, took off my jacket, and sat in the sun, brooding disconsolately.

You can't learn everything from print, I told myself reasonably. The really important things people never write down, and you can only learn them through word of mouth or personal experience.

But, reasonable as this was, I knew I could never accept it. Somewhere there was a formula, a key that opened everything.

And then up drove Marjorie Webster.

"Am I late?" she shouted. A little blonde with a tense white face behind big sunglasses, riding in a red Austin-Healy Sprite.

"He left just a minute ago."

"Oh dear! That green car?"

"Yes."

She considered a minute and then got out. Good slim legs, but with just a trace of varicosity on the ankles. And a steno pad—Jesus Christ! Even television reporters don't use steno pads. I was insulted that my case was considered so inconsequential as to deserve such an amateur.

"What did you two decide?" she asked.

"Everything's been put off for the next six months. By then you might have a story."

"Well, I could write a feature story now, possibly for the Sunday edition," she said.

I shrugged.

"You know what I'd like to do," she resumed brightly. "I could interview you now, leaving the date and type of story open. A great deal would depend on your judgment, of course."

"Whatever you like."

"Well, why don't we get started? Do you have another chair?"

And we sat down under the slowly intensifying morning sun.

"As I told you before, I'm interested in the human-interest angle." She removed her sunglasses to—I suppose—look more human. "Not courts, not laws, nor even Zoning Commissioners, but people—how they really think and feel. I. . . ."

Her eyes had found, for the first time, one of the Wallace stickers. And from where she sat, four others were visible. Formerly indifferent, I suddenly found myself enjoying her middle-class discomfort.

And, feeling mean, I forced her to meet my eyes.

"Are those on every trailer?" she asked sharply.

"Except mine."

"Oh, then you're not—"

"I just don't care," I said, studying her curiously.

"Well, I do care very much!" she exclaimed shrilly. "I care about what's happening to this country. Look at Chicago, the riots—"

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"Would you like something to drink?" I interrupted. Jeremiads like these bother me. "I have Cokes, ginger ale, iced tea, beer, wine—a very good white wine. I might have quinine water for gin and tonics. No, it's not hot enough for gin and tonics. I'll get some wine." Without waiting for an answer, I went into the trailer and poured two glasses of Chablis.

When I came out, she had composed herself. She accepted the wine, and we sat silently for a while.

"You must think I'm pretty stupid," she said finally.

I said nothing.

"Well, all right, if it's some kind of a game, you've won, if it makes you feel any better," she persisted. "Anyway, I want to ask you a question."

"Yes?"

"Do you hate me because I'm a woman or because I'm a liberal?"

That didn't make sense. And anyway, I'm apolitical.

"I don't hate you at all," I said quickly. "But listen, it's past eleven o'clock, and I didn't eat breakfast, so that means it's time for lunch. Would you like a sandwich?"

"It is late," she said noncommittally.

"Liverwurst with lettuce and tomato? Or head cheese? I've got some bologna too, but I wouldn't vouch for it. You see, I have this craving for glandular meats—I rarely eat any other type, except perhaps a hamburger from time to time."

"Liverwurst will be fine," she said, frowning uncertainly.

"Mustard or mayonnaise?"

"Mustard."

And so we sat, ate, and argued. Marjorie was a graduate of the New England College for Women, she was quick to tell me, where she had majored in political science and had been "exposed to a broad diversity of ideas and opinions—that's the essence of a liberal education, you know."

"Is that right?"

"Of course it is! But you've been to college," she said.

"True."

"Graduate?"

"Yes."

"You never told me what it is you do."

"I rebuild diesel engines."

"Then you're an engineer."

"No."

"Well, in any case, your problem is crystal clear to me. Your education has overstressed the scientific and technical aspects, leaving no room for the humanistic values."

"*What* values?"

"Humanistic—having to do with human beings."

"Which are?"

"Do you need to have everything explained?"

"Probably so," I replied, not expecting an answer. The day was wearing on, and there was no money in sitting around. But, surprisingly, she tried to answer my question.

"First of all," she began, "there are many who might disagree, but I think religious values are very important. Do you believe in God?"

"No."

"Not at all?"

"Not at all."

"Well, what do you believe in?"

She seemed more friend than foe at the moment. But I hesitated to tell her about myself, though I knew it wouldn't make any real difference. I had the safety of knowing I was unique, unbelievable, and consequently unpublishable.

"The Digestive Process," I replied.

She only stared blankly in response. We were in for a long afternoon.

## *The Centrists*

*America needs to hear the vital voices of the broad and vital center. The center is under savage attack. It must be held at all costs.*
—Richard M. Nixon, 1968

I CAN barely remember beginning life as an orphan.

My first memory is of a large fan, slowly and ineffectively churning through the summer heat, in the emergency room of the Plattsburgh General Hospital in upstate New York.

My parents had died that day, July 21, 1944, a Sunday, after their car had skidded on wet pavement during a sudden rainstorm, then somehow leaped a retaining wall on a twisting, downhill road going into Plattsburgh. I still carry in my wallet the newspaper clipping describing the accident, embalmed in a special plastic guaranteed to protect against ultraviolet light.

I had been riding in the back seat at the time, and my only injury was an ear lacerated by an open ashtray on the armrest, leaving me in adult life with one lobe lower than the other.

I was almost five then, but cannot remember anything more until almost a year later. About a week after the accident, my father's cousin, Matthew Bentham, together with his wife Hortense, arrived in Plattsburgh, took charge of my father's estate, and became my legal guardian.

After the funeral, the three of us left for their home in Centropolis, a town of about 15,000 in eastern Kansas located on the Republican River at the junction of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (M-K-T) Line.

THE next time you look at a map of the United States, consider Kansas.

It has what the noted graphic designer and theorist Laslaw Molybdenum called "classic proportions, a rectangle twice as wide as it is high, conforming to the Golden Rule of Sectionality."

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The Missouri River nibbles away the northeast corner, a light touch of asymmetry in this flat land, but elsewhere the Euclidean grid of highways and county lines is hardly ever bent or broken.

The Benthams have lived in Kansas for five generations, moving west in 1857 when the Reverend Jeremiah Bentham, a Methodist minister in a small Massachusetts town, suddenly and unaccountably began gathering a traveling party after more than forty years of uneventful preaching and sermonizing. Jeremiah, despite his name, was a congenital optimist, booster, and backslapper, and easily organized a small clan of relatives and followers around him.

They began in the spring, traveling in easy, deliberate stages, and by November of that year, the little band of about thirty had arrived in Kansas City, where they spent the winter.

Spring came, and the tired old man (he was seventy-four), reinvigorated by rumors that the Santa Fe Railroad was planning to build a line across the Republican River, gathered his followers around him once more. Nearly 100 miles out of Kansas City, they reached the river, and here the lightning struck. I quote from the official program of the Centropolis Centennial, which I had to attend in 1958:

> When first sighted by the Reverend Bentham on that spring of 1858, our fair city was then a beautiful, grassy, nearly level expanse covering about three square miles. It was bounded on the north by the Republican River and on the south by a line of surveyors' stakes marking the yet unfinished Santa Fe line to Dodge City.
>
> In places, the beauty of primitive Kansas may be seen still in an almost unimpaired state. The flinty residual soil left by the Great Glacial Period is clothed by a wealth of bluestem grass which in the spring is decorated by numerous species of wild flowers. The waving herbiage and the infinite diversity of contour of the gently rolling hills terraced by escarpments of limestone strata, best displayed by the lengthened shadows of early morning or toward nightfall, constitute a scene of beauty of which the eye never tires.
>
> In the Reverend Bentham's time the river bottom presented beauty of another type. The watercourses were bordered by timber, as the forest trees of the East struggled for dominance with the prairie grass of the West. On the adjacent flat land grass grew far more luxuriantly than on the uplands. Flowers of many species also occurred abundantly in their season.
>
> When he came upon this inspiring vista, the Reverend Bentham sank to his knees and offered his thanks to the Lord for their safe journey.
>
> Then he rose to his feet, and lifting above his head the pruning hook he carried in place of a staff, symbolizing soil fertility, proclaimed in sonorous Latin—for he knew no Greek—*"Hic est centrum"* (Here is the center) and thrust it into the ground. The new settlers then prayed that their land would prove fertile, and that abundance would greet their first harvest.

The crops planted that year succeeded, but in another respect the Reverend's hopes were bitterly disappointed.

He had named his city Centropolis, believing that the United States Territorial Commission would make Kansas a square state, fixing the western boundary at the 6th meridian of longitude and giving all the rest of present Kansas and eastern Colorado "back to the Indians."

The site he had chosen was only 15 miles from the geographic center of the United States, and the proposed boundary would place it in the exact center of the new state as well.

But in 1860 the boundaries were finally set by the Territorial Commission, then meeting in Washington, D.C., and, much to the Reverend's disgust, the western border was pushed well into Colorado Territory. The old man, ailing and near death, gathered the Bentham family around him for the last time and made all members swear an oath never to return to the politically corrupt and decadent East. He died soon afterward, leaving a family tradition.

My father was the only one who disobeyed. In the 30's a few relatives, hard pressed by the Depression, sold their property and moved to California. This was resented, but they could claim—belatedly—that they were pioneers.

Gerald, as my father was always called, presented a more difficult problem. After graduating from the University of Kansas in 1937, he told the family he wanted to attend Columbia University Law School.

Utter dismay resulted at first. Gerald had always been the family favorite. Tall, slender, and fair-haired, with the closely-set eyes and aquiline nose that had become, since Jeremiah, almost Bentham trademarks, he was an excellent student and had won letters in basketball and track. Law school at Kansas or Missouri, then a junior partnership in my great-uncle's law firm, had been assumed from the start.

But the longer the family tried to dissuade him, the more obstinate he became, offering to pay the additional expenses out of his savings, or the entire tuition plus room and board if it came to that.

Money was not really a problem, however. My father's family had always been skillful, in a conservative way, with money, maximizing gains and minimizing losses. They had always invested only in commercial property and better quality home mortgages and were lucky enough to be only slightly scratched by the Depression. The funds were there, and, seeing his determination, they gave in grumblingly, telling each other that in three years' time he would be "back home where he belonged."

His first year passed uneventfully. That summer, as he had since age ten, he clerked diligently at my grandfather's

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grocery store. During the evenings he listened to my great-uncle curse "Roosevelt and all his tribe" and blame the Depression on the shiftless and the faint of heart.

That fall a letter came. He was "head over heels in love with the most intellectually brilliant woman I've ever met." Another letter—they were engaged and he had bought her a "diamond as big as the Ritz" with all his savings. Then they came home together for the Christmas vacation.

Her name was Laura Hegel, and she was an instructor in philosophy at Barnard College. Brilliant she indeed was, the family readily agreed. But not the right sort of girl for Gerald —oh no!

When she first met my father, Laura was thirty-four, a widow. Her first husband had died a decade before in her native Swabia, and she had used part of the proceeds from his estate to book passage to America, "the land of the future," as she called it.

Arriving in Boston, she proceeded directly to Cambridge where she supported herself by tutoring German, Latin, and Greek, and took classes at the Harvard Graduate School. She was, she told the family, the first woman ever to receive a doctorate in philosophy from Harvard.

And, of course, they hated her from the start. Bentham women had always been soft-spoken and pious, the upholders of domesticity and religion. Laura completely disregarded the former and paid lip service to the latter, they felt.

"A real snake, that woman!" Matthew once recalled vehemently. "She'd argue all sides of any question. If you were a Republican, she'd pretend to be a Democrat, and vicey versey. Why, one time she said she was an atheist—but then everybody was gettin' hot under the collar—so she turned around and used the *same* argument to prove she believed in God. Poor Gerald just didn't stand a chance."

Poor Gerald. The photographs my parents left behind seem to echo the family's dismay. My father (at Laura's insistence I was given the middle name of Detritus, "to avoid calling the boy a Junior"), six feet two inches, slender and handsome, seems embarrassed and ineffectual. Then my mother, nearly a foot shorter, sallow and stocky, with jet black hair in a severe academic bun. Sometimes she is smiling and sometimes scowling, but she dominates every picture.

The Christmas vacation ended inconclusively. After Gerald and Laura took the train back to New York, my great-uncle, who had become the leader of the opposition, hired a private detective to investigate her background. The claims she had made about herself checked out, except that Harvard class records showed several other women had received doctorates in philosophy before her. "But we didn't say anything to Gerald, 'cause we knew she had the brains to wiggle out of that," Matthew told me much later.

Stubbornly, the family hired another detective, and this one reported back a rumor that Laura, during her student days in Cambridge, had had a child. Authentic or not, it was enough for my great-uncle. He put through a call to Gerald immediately.

They were all too late. My parents had been married a few weeks before and were spending their honeymoon of a week's semester break in a friend's cottage on Staten Island—a place, I was told, synonymous with immorality.

The record shows clearly, I want to add, that I was not born until the "decent interval" of ten months later. But by that time my father was disinherited, several times over, by various members of the family.

## *The Philosophic Background*

*Man's a mosaic, but life is linear.*
—Galaxy S. Gutenberg

"And then what happened?" Marjorie asked.

"It was the Depression, and they had practically no money. My father had to leave law school, but then somehow found a job teaching high-school English and biology in Plattsburgh. I don't know whether he had a certificate or not; there aren't many records left. Anyway, they were struggling, like everyone else at the time."

"It's truly sad," she empathized. "When I read books of that period—novels like *Grapes of Wrath* —I can't help but feel compassion. It should be enough to make a liberal out of even the most hard-hearted person."

"Now wait a minute," I protested, "As a liberal you don't feel much compassion for the people who live in these trailers. And they're quite similar to the Okies and Arkies, but they have a little more money—that's all."

"No," she replied firmly, "they are not the same people at all. They've been brutalized by technology."

"And what's so bad about technology?"

"It brutalizes people!"

I said nothing and checked my watch. We had come to another conversational impasse.

"You were about to explain your philosophy," she persisted.

"I am."

"But what you've really told me is just a small part of your life story."

"I can only develop ideas sequentially and in context," I replied irritably.

"O.K.—just tell me what you mean by the 'Digestive Process,' and I'll go away." She was laughing at me.

"Somewhere near the bottom of an orange crate inside my trailer is a piece of paper with seven ideas on it. Wait a minute, and I can work from that."

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"Are they developed sequentially and in context?" She was still teasing.

"Yes."

"ONE) One of my few distinct memories of early childhood was a map which Matthew had framed and hung in the living room. Roughly 3 by 5 feet, perhaps larger, it was titled "The Principal Rail Lines and Public Highways of the United States." The railroads were in red, if I recall correctly, and the highways in blue. I always imagined they were the arteries and veins of some huge animal, an idea encouraged by Matthew's constant references to Kansas as the 'heart of the nation,' to Chicago as the 'stomach,' and to New York (always scornfully) as the 'brains.' The entire country, it seemed natural to assume, was a Superorganism with a life of its own.

"2) Matthew and Hortense did not read books—their library consisted of a Bible, some Methodist hymnals, and several years of the *Reader's Digest*. I used to explore my parents' books, which had never been unpacked, but were kept in the attic in nine large trunks. While married, they seemed to have separately pursued their own interests, as each book was neatly labeled with one or the other's name. Laura's philosophy and history were dry and unintelligible, but my father's tastes in literature and biology were much more appealing. And there was one book, Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Life of the White Ant*, a description of termite colonies, which dazzled my twelve-year-old mind completely. For example, this excerpt:

> The workers alone are able to eat and digest. They are, as it were, the collective stomach and belly of the population. When a termite of whatsoever class feels hungry, it taps a passing worker with its antenna. If the suppliant is very young, capable of becoming a king, a queen, or a winged termite, the worker immediately gives it whatever it may have in its stomach. If the petitioner is an adult, the worker turns tail and generously proffers the contents of its intestine.
>
> Here we have obviously an absolute communism, a communism of the oesophagus and the bowels, a collective coprophagy. In this flourishing and sinister republic, no loss is permitted of anything that, from an economic point of view, realizes the sordid ideal that nature seems to put before us. If a termite happens to change its skin, the slough is immediately devoured. Should one die—worker, king, queen, or warrior—the corpse is forthwith eaten up by the survivors. There is no waste; the clearance is automatic, and always profitable: everything is good, nothing lies about, everything is edible, everything is cellulose, and the material is used almost indefinitely over and over again. Moreover, excrement is the raw material, so to speak, of all their activities, including, as we have just seen, nutrition.
>
> . . . one might say that they are first and foremost transcendental chemists whose learning has triumphed over every prejudice, every aversion, who have attained the serene conviction that nothing in nature is repugnant, that all can be reduced to a few simple bodies, chemically indifferent, clean and pure.
>
> . . . all is darkness: underground tyranny, cruelty, sordid, filthy avarice, the atmosphere of the convict cell, the penal settlement and the charnel house; but also, at the summit, a whole-hearted, heroic, deliberate, and intelligent sacrifice to an idea or an instinct—the name matters little, the results are the same—a sacrifice that is without limit and almost infinite; and this must be held to compensate for what merely seems beautiful. It brings the victims nearer to ourselves, it makes them almost our brothers; and, from certain points of view, causes these wretched insects, more than the bee or any other living creature on earth, to become the heralds, perhaps the precursors, of our own destiny.

"3) Maeterlinck's book influenced me more profoundly than anything else I've ever read. 'Why?' was my basic question, and 'Will this prophecy come true for human beings?' was its corollary. Throughout my teen-age years I read every book I could find on insects.

"But it was a long time—not until my senior year of high school—before I found even a tentative answer to my first question.

"The termites had, in the distant past, one geneticist claimed, been far more individualistic. They had come to their present state through *regressive evolution*—i.e., evolution running backwards.

"Regressive evolution occurs when the individual organism relinquishes some of its independence and freedom to become a more closely cooperating member of a group. Long before, a decision had somehow been made that the termites would band together and devour each other's excrement instead of chewing their separate paths through the dead wood of the world. And so the individual termites of all social classes had degenerated in size, strength, and physical complexity—this was attested by fossil records.

"4) As a result of these and other influences, I had become completely radicalized by the time I arrived in college. But the times (it was the late 50's) were such that I could not—and still can't, for that matter—find a political home. Disdaining Eisenhower and Stevenson as equally contemptible conformists, I liked the beards and motorcycles of the Beat Generation as well as the sarcasm and invective of William F. Buckley, Jr. and the *National Review*. Individualism was absolutely good, and conformity was absolutely bad. And so I grew a beard, wore a denim jacket, and rode a motorcycle—read Jack Kerouac and complained about 'creeping socialism' and the 'welfare state.' I remember that, in my sophomore year, I was one of the founding members of the local chapter of the Intercollegiate Society of

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Individualists, a politically conservative student group. A few months later, the rest of them threw me out, claiming I was a 'Marxist malcontent.'

"In a peculiar way, they were right, although the object of my discontent was Marx himself. Let me explain.

"It was during the first semester that I changed my major from English to economics, inspired by a remarkable definition in my textbook, Paul Samuelson's *Economics: An Introductory Analysis*. He says:

> Economics is the study of how men and society *choose,* with or without the use of money, to employ *scarce* productive resources to produce various commodities over time and distribute them for consumption, now and in the future, among various people and groups in society.

"This cut into life itself, far deeper than anything I'd found in literature. Compared with Samuelson, Hemingway and Sartre seemed amateurish fumblers. My path was clear: I would major in economics and do graduate work at the University of Chicago.

"But as the academic year wore on, I became increasingly depressed. Charts, graphs, tables, numbers—nothing that really *meant* anything, not to me at any rate. Samuelson's book, after that wonderful introduction, was a washout and an evasion, but the good economists, like Milton Friedman and George Stigler, were too mathematical for me to understand.

"5) Looking back through the history of economics on my own, I began reading Marx's work and the accompanying commentary. At the very core of Marxist philosophy, one scholar implied, was Ludwig Feuerbach's slogan: *'Der Mensch ist, was er isst'* (You are what you eat). The whole structure of economic determinism seemed to rest on man's preference for eating—although the slogan itself had long since been prostituted into a puff for nutrition education.

"6) But not only was Marx's emphasis on communal activity anathema to me—his economic predictions on the overthrow of the bourgeosie had turned out wrong as well. Even then it was obvious that blue-collar workers were becoming more politically conservative than the hordes of white-collar pencil pushers who thought they ran everything.

"But if man was not what he ate, what was he?

"I did not have far to look. Coming up rapidly on the academic horizon of that time were reports of a fundamental economic/psychological sickness. Whether termed the 'Affluent Society' or the 'Excremental Vision,' the malady was uniform: a spiritually sick condition in which men lust for possessions and despise them at the same time. The sickness ('You are what you excrete') threatened the long-running love affair between men and things—and might even degrade humans into termites after all.

"As a conservative, my mission was clear. I would have to save materialism from destroying itself. But, as I'll explain further along, I later lost interest in politics.

"7) Unfortunately, we must proceed ahead from this point by faith alone and as individuals. Society will probably never confront the basic issue, but will evade it through dodges such as—"

"PARDON me," Marjorie interrupted restlessly, "explain please—just what is the basic issue?"

"Creativity versus Crap."

"I beg your pardon?"

". . . such as wars and swindles. All right, I mentioned faith. Che Guevara said that a man must find himself 'mirrored' in the work that he does. But this is only part of the truth—I finally came to feel that a man must also find himself in *things*—as well as in the process of possessing, consuming, and creating.

"Possession, Consumption, Creation—these three words define the universe! For that's the way the brain works; you acquire experience—Possession; you think about it—Consumption; and you decide what you're going to do with it—Creation.

"This is what I call the Digestive Process," I concluded, a little breathlessly. "And that's why there's such a thin line between Creativity and Crap."

She neither smiled nor frowned, and I continued.

"So here I am in this trailer surrounded by hillbillies. That doesn't bother me—I'm getting out soon. The ability to move—that's what's important.

"My job isn't much, but I can do things with the skill I've learned. I'm designing an engine that's more efficient and almost pollution-free. I plan on getting a woodworking lathe so that I can turn wood as well as metal. Then I'll design furniture. I may even take advantage of the tax system and go into business for myself—souping up engines for hot rods, that's creative to a degree. Or making metal sculpture. Or furniture.

"But it's got to be something I like, you understand. Otherwise, it's just like working for wages in a dull job all over again—churning out shit to help plants grow. Most people don't know what they want—the hell with them. But I do, and I'm going to do it."

We were silent a long time, while I tried tiredly to remember everything I'd said—to improve on it for next time.

"It all seems a little selfish," she observed timidly.

But when I asked if I could see her again, she agreed—as I knew she would.

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# Encounter Groups and Other Panaceas

*Alan L. Mintz*

*Anytime you use the words* now *and* how *and become aware of this, you grow. Each time you use the question* why, *you diminish in stature. You bother yourself with false, unnecessary information. You only feed the computer, the intellect. And the intellect is the whore of intelligence. It's a drag on your life.*

—Frederick S. Perls

SHORTLY after World War II, behavior in small groups became the focus of an exceptional amount of interest in several fields of the social sciences. Within the psychoanalytic community, group psychotherapy came to be regarded as an alternative to the traditional one-to-one relationship between therapist and patient. Psychotherapists, however, mostly remained concerned with the progress of individual patients and valued the group largely as a technique to extend the availability of therapy without altering the body of received ideas about the healing process. It was left to social psychologists to approach the group on its own terms. In the late 40's researchers like Kenneth Benne, Leland Bradford, Jack Gibb, and Ronald Lippit set up the National Training Laboratories, a summer workshop in Bethel, Maine, which originated the now famous Training Group, or as it came to be called, the T-Group or the sensitivity group. The T-Group was composed of twelve to sixteen members who met several hours a day over a two-week period to discuss a social issue like nuclear disarmament or racial equality or, as commonly happened, to do without an agenda altogether and center discussion on "interpersonal events" that had transpired during the life of the group itself. The professional leader was called a trainer and his job was to observe the group and point out the nature of the "interaction" that was taking place among its members and make comments on the "process" of its growth.

The sources of support and the motivations behind the first work with T-Groups formed a complex set of interests. First, after World War II social scientists, aghast at totalitarianism and humbled by the meager state of their knowledge about collective behavior, sought ways to study differences between authoritarian and democratic styles of behavior. Because of its manageability the small group was used as a microcosmic laboratory for collecting data on configurations of leadership, the formation of coalitions, solidarity and identification with the group, and rates of interaction. On account of this scientific perspective, the spread of T-Groups to other parts of the country was regarded as part of the "laboratory movement." Second, large corporations and graduate schools of business dispatched executives to T-Groups in order to heighten their "sensitivity" to co-workers, increase their managerial skills, and generally improve their knowledge of how people work in groups with a view to making them work better. Third, professionals (and laymen) in the "human relations" field—public-school supervisors, youth workers, personnel consultants, PTA presidents, clergymen, and the like—attended group sessions in the hope of acquiring the skills that would make them more effective in their respective institutions. Finally, small groups were used to explore how conflicts—racial, regional, intergenerational, industrial—might be resolved. The eventual hope here was to develop techniques of reconciliation that could be applied on a wide scale, although the immediate goal was to get the estranged parties to sit down, understand one another, and reduce the level of tension. Many of the contracts which the National Training Laboratories received in the early 50's came from public-school systems and employment commissions that wished to expedite racial integration.

In the late 50's the nature of sensitivity training changed decisively. Instead of being drawn from the ranks of social psychologists, sociologists, and educators, group leaders now tended to be recruited from among those with backgrounds in psychiatry and clinical psychology. Training in human relations or the acquisition of certain skills of communication and management was played down, for as compared with their interest in personality change, the clinicians did not have a strong commitment to the "back home" problems of social change that members themselves brought to the group. In their place the new leaders emphasized the potential impact of the actual "experience" of the group on the life of the partic-

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ipants. It had been discovered almost as an accidental by-product of the training orientation that in a group that met for an extended time one could often expect several powerful experiences: startling disclosures and confessions, strong expressions of love or anger from repressed individuals, and a generally heightened sense of well-being, especially after a "breakthrough" in communication. Sensitivity training in these years became absorbed in the search for methods that would generate more of these dramatic breakthroughs within increasingly shorter periods of time. Since what was being done in the group obviously came very close to therapy, resolute lines were drawn between psychotherapy, which was supposed to "make sick people well," and sensitivity training, which was supposed to aid reasonably healthy people to "develop their potentialities more directly and to lead more authentic lives." In the process, talking, which had been the basic mode of communication, lost some of its primacy to gesture, touch, and other forms of what were called "non-verbal" methods.

THE shift in emphasis was inspired by a growing body of theoretical writing produced by the psychologists Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Maslow became the fathering theoretician of the new movement, Rogers its chief clinician. Together they founded Humanistic Psychology, the new science of the "whole person," and encouraged the growth of the Human Potential movement, the expression of that science in groups. In books like *Motivation and Personality* and *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Maslow sketched the outlines of what he considered a "new conception of human sickness and of human health." These are its basic assumptions:

> We have, each of us, an essential biologically based inner nature, which is to some degree "natural," intrinsic, given, and, in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or, at least, unchanging. . . . This inner nature, as much as we know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically or primarily or necessarily evil. The basic needs (*for life, for safety and security, for belongingness and affection, for respect and self-respect, and for self-actualization* [emphasis added]), the basic human emotions and the basic human capacities are on their face either neutral, pre-moral, or positively "good." Destructiveness, sadism, cruelty, malice, etc., seem so far to be not intrinsic but rather they seem to be violent reactions *against* frustration of our intrinsic needs. . . . Human nature is not nearly as bad as it has been thought to be. In fact it can be said that the possibilities of human nature have customarily been sold short. . . . Since this inner nature is good or neutral rather than bad, it is best to bring it out and to encourage it rather than to suppress it. If it is permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy. . . . Even though weak, it rarely disappears in the normal person—perhaps not even in the sick person. Even though denied, it persists underground forever pressing for actualization.

Society, in Maslow's view, tampers with man's inner nature and frustrates it by layering upon it roles, facades, and masks. The healthy self does its best to survive this process and retrieve its authenticity by throwing off the accumulations of foreign matter. Society additionally hampers the individual by denying him gratification of certain basic needs—italicized in the passage above—for community, love, respect, and so forth. Maslow posits a "hierarchy" in which these "deficiency needs" form the lower, and "growth needs" the upper, tiers, a division which corresponds roughly to the difference between sickness and health.

According to Maslow, all previous psychology has been the study of pathology, of the sick who have become so because their needs have been frustrated. The goal of the new science is to establish a psychology of health, a normative psychology of individuals who have stepped up to the second tier and who can then "actualize" themselves along the unexplored horizon of "growth." The self-actualizing individual is the hero-subject of Maslow's investigations, that "fully growing and self-fulfilling human being, the one in whom all potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely, rather than being warped, suppressed, or denied." Released from lower needs, healthy man is free to listen to the voice of his inner nature and to submit to its pressure toward growth and self-realization.

For Maslow and Rogers, growth is a process of becoming more oneself, more "like what one truly is," less reliant on reinforcement from without. As validation flows from within, the healthy person comes to be characterized by "increased detachment and desire for privacy . . . increased spontaneity . . . increased autonomy, and resistance to enculturation." Or, as Rogers has put it, he moves away from "oughts" and from the need to meet the expectations of others toward greater trust in himself. A growth-oriented person, moreover, can be identified by his enhanced capacity for "peak experiences," isolated moments of intense positive feeling, rapture, love, or creativity.

Maslow considered himself a humanist as well as a scientist, and he wrote frequently about the ethical implications of his discoveries and the system of values they implied. Referring to his ideas as outlined above, he claimed that

> . . . if these assumptions are proven true, they promise a scientific ethics, a natural value system, a court of ultimate appeal for the determination of good and bad, of right and wrong. The more we learn about man's natural tendencies, the easier it will be to tell him how to be good, how to be happy. . . . This amounts to automatic solution of many of the personality problems of the future.

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ROGERS became well-known for a therapeutic technique called client-centered counseling, which, although developed independently, was essentially the practical application of Maslow's ideas. He similarly posits an inherent tendency within the person toward wholeness and "selfhood" and he believes that it is the job of the therapist merely to "facilitate" or "enable" this process to unfold. Rogers suggests that the therapist be highly "non-directive," that instead of interpreting symptoms and unconscious behavior he concentrate largely on offering support and sympathy. If the client-therapist relationship creates the right climate of encouragement, the unintegrated person can move away from facades and masks toward becoming his true self, characterized by "self-direction, openness to experience, acceptance of others, and trust of self."

When in the middle of the 60's the center of the group movement switched to the West Coast, Maslow and Rogers found a receptive setting for the mass application of ideas they had been nurturing in the classroom and the clinic for fifteen years. There the rather austere methods of the laboratory mingled with the heady serendipity of religion, psychotherapy, and physical hygiene that make up the hip and upwardly mobile truth-seeking culture of California. The West Coast, it has been said often enough, is a state of mind located on the edges of culture, and many of the pop-sociological observations about life in that zone, even on special scrutiny, seem to be perfectly true: the severance from history, the disowning of ethnic background, the preoccupation with the body, the receptivity to Eastern religion, the obsession with the apocalypse. And, of course, money. There, on the Pacific coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the celebrated Esalen Institute was established, the T-Group was wedded to the "new culture," and the Encounter was born.

The terms of the marriage involved discarding the paraphernalia of scientific research and, for that matter, the pretense of using groups for dealing with social issues or for resolving conflict. Esalen distilled the features of the group that tended to produce the most dramatic "life-changes": confrontations, confessions, catharses—that is, techniques that could break through the self's defenses and generate powerful expressions of emotion. The Esalen experience, it was claimed, was not for those who had trouble controlling their drives and emotions, but rather for those who had been *too successfully* socialized and who in the process had been left emotionally desiccated. This meant "normals" whose behavior was not overtly self-destructive but whose feelings and intellect were chronically out of phase and who badly needed to "get back in touch with themselves."

The encounter group was, in this sense, intended to be a corrective. Within the group the roles that one was forced to play in society might be discarded and the genuine self, standing without masks and props, nurtured and encouraged. Masks were no longer necessary because the group preferred the naked face. If the encounterer were willing to "risk" enough, that is, if he were willing to reveal enough of his true feelings of weakness and anger, he could be assured of meeting with acceptance rather than with the ridicule he might otherwise expect in ordinary social situations. In learning to trust the group he would come in time to trust himself, the real self which had value independent of its defenses and posturings.

The realness of the real self could only be discovered in the present moment. The kind of historical "archaeology" which is the cornerstone of conventional insight therapy was of little utility here, for in seeking to understand the past—understanding being the cognitive enterprise that it is—one avoided *feeling* in the "now." The late Frederick Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy (related to Gestalt psychology's theories of perception in little more than name), stated that the chief duty of man is to exist, or as he put it, "to be fully present," in the "here-and-now." The encounterer is not interested in reports of feelings or in descriptions of past conflict or even, for that matter, in fantasies of the future; he wants only to know how he feels in the here-and-now, and he is willing to deal with the past only as an acted-out present. The purpose of this discipline is to enable one to be "in touch with his feelings," to be able, as it were, to check in with oneself, and discover what, at a given moment, disentangled from ambivalences and "oughts," one really feels. For Perls, existence is an "awareness continuum" in which one sensation quickly succeeds another: now I feel angry, now I feel ashamed, now I feel strong. Feelings do not overlap in time but exist intensely and give way to others. Simultaneity—the essence of the Freudian situation in which we feel in the same moment a conflict between what one part of the self wants and what another part prescribes—is precisely the doctrine Perls and the encounter movement seek to reverse.

In the process of "getting in touch," the obstacle is intellect. Words not only are poor approximations of feelings but often stand in the way of feeling and defuse its power. Dancing, touching, and gesturing, therefore, can restore immediacy of communication, because, rather than being relayed through verbal symbols, they convey feeling directly. The encounter ideally should guide "the individual *to* the firm bedrock of his experiences and *away from* endless, thin verbalizations, explanations, speculations, interpretations." "Awareness of body feelings, of sensations and perceptions," we are told by one of Perls's disciples, "constitute our most certain—perhaps our only

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certain—knowledge. Relying on information provided in awareness is the best method of implementing Perls's dictum: 'lose your mind and become your senses.' "

Since gestures communicate better than words, abstract feelings are best acted out in the concrete. Thus a sense of trust can be expressed by allowing oneself to fall backward into the arms of the group; the inclusion of an estranged participant can be accomplished by forming a tight huddle and drawing him into the center; after an insult each member of the group can give support by approaching the hurt party and embracing him. In general, the body must begin to do the bidding of the emotions rather than of the intellect: the body, separated for so long from the mind and soul of Western man, must finally receive its due. Men must once again learn to touch one another, to rediscover the texture of the surfaces of the body, to renew faith in their essential sensuousness, to speak less and touch more. Manipulated in the right way the body can yield a sense of euphoria. Kneaded correctly it can be purged of the stress and anxiety accumulated over years of repression. Esalen, with a kind of syncretic genius, turned both to the East and to the West; equally to the body-building culture of Southern California and to the ascetic spirituality of the East. Alongside the renegades from the psychotherapeutic establishment who formed the core of the Institute, stood the former weightlifter Bernard Gunther (author of a popular book on massage called *What to Do Until the Messiah Comes*) and the popularizer of Eastern religion, Alan Watts.

The premise that allows the encounter group to make good on its promise is, simply, honesty. Nothing may be left concealed; the first obligation of the group member is to express all of his feelings toward other members. Although many feelings might at first be negative, even cruelly vindictive, all are laid out in the belief that they are better out than in and that eventually all contribute to the goal of "expanding awareness." To respect the defenses of another person is ultimately to do him an injustice by perpetuating a system of illusions which can only separate him further from his true self. In encounter, transparency is a therapeutic absolute, one which need not be feared because it can be assumed from the start that among people of good faith a sufficient level of trust and responsibility will always be present.

If honesty does prevail, the encounterer can expect an experience of unparalleled authenticity and intimacy. Once facades have been torn down and masks discarded, and once communication has taken place through the body as well as through words, then a profound and thrilling intimacy unfolds, all the more remarkable because it occurs among strangers and in a matter of a few days—if not hours. "Encounter groups bring people closer together than ever before in our history except for great crises," asserts Carl Rogers. "I've heard many people turn to another member of the group and say, 'I know you better than I know some members of my own family.' " At the height of this intimacy is a kind of wordless sympathetic understanding which Jacob Moreno, the developer of a widely used therapeutic technique called psychodrama, described as early as 1910 as the *Begegnung*, the Encounter:

> [These] are actors who are connected with one another by an invisible correspondence of feelings, who have a sort of heightened sensitivity for their mutual inner processes, one gesture is sufficient and often they do not look at one another, they communicate through a new sense as if by "medial understanding."

After hours of the stripping-away process the encounterer often sees that all the suffering he has endured in his life is merely an emanation of the pain he experienced when he was separated from the love of his parents. His rage is rage at their defection, his defenses a shield against the scourges of that pain. In screaming out his anger against his parents, he returns to a childlike state in which he may actually re-experience the ordeal of rejection. Writhing on the floor before the group, his anger spends itself and turns to infantile joy and spontaneity. The members of the group surround him and gather him up in a nurturing embrace. He has replaced his anguished early life with a new childhood within the arms of the new family. He has been reborn.

Such dramatic changes are the goal of encounter groups, and the quality of a given group is judged by their incidence. The actual duration of the groups originally was several hours a day for a two-week summer workshop or two hours a week over the course of the therapeutic year. But during the late 60's there arose a growing impatience with the limitations of formats which, by their intermittent nature, allowed accumulated energies to be discharged, thus needlessly lengthening the process of change. As an alternative method the Marathon was developed: a group which met essentially uninterrupted for anywhere from six hours to three days. The Marathon, as one of its developers, George Bach, has stated, uses as its chief technique the power of group-pressure to demand and elicit honesty and openness, or, as he calls it, "spontaneous leveling." Because the experience is continuous there is no opportunity for the mounting stress to be relaxed, and toward the early morning hours—sleep-deprivation is used as a lever—confessions and catharses flow with increasing frequency. "The Marathon," Bach asserts, "is not unlike a 'pressure cooker' in which phony steam boils away and genuine emotions (including negative ones)

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emerge." Among encounter procedures the Marathon is now the one perhaps most widely employed. It represents a movement away from ongoing interaction toward one-shot intensity, and it can be seen as a response to the demand that "growth and awareness experiences" be produced with increasing speed.

The most extreme form of encounter technique is the "attack" approach used in the treatment of drug addicts. In residential rehabilitation centers like Synanon and Daytop, ex-addicts act as one another's therapists in regularly scheduled sessions and in impromptu meetings called whenever a member feels the need. The interaction that takes place in the groups is often violent and hostile as members viciously attack one another for being phony or for neglecting responsibilities. Although a prohibition against physical violence is in force, it is the only restriction on the expression of thoughts and feelings. Through ruthless and unrelenting honesty it is hoped that the addict can learn to face life-problems head on and thus escape the denial of reality which led him to drugs in the first place. The attacks and counter-attacks, however, are confined to group sessions, and in their day-to-day life members of the therapeutic community are to treat one another with warmth and mutual support.

New varieties of encounter groups appear every year, and "growth centers" like Esalen seasonally adjust their offerings to take advantage of recent developments. The writings of the psychiatrist Eric Berne have lately achieved great popularity through Thomas Harris, one of Berne's disciples, who in a best-seller called *I'm OK, You're OK* has rendered a simplified and up-beat version of Berne's thinking. The technique, known as Transactional Analysis, is supposed to uncover the shifting transactions within the individual of three ego states: parent, child, adult. Another recent and extraordinarily popular therapy is Primal Therapy, developed by Arthur Janov, who believes quite sincerely that he has found *the* cure for neurosis. According to this system neurotic behavior emerges as a defense against the reservoir of "primal pain" that results from separation from the parents. In a continual series of bloodcurdling catharses called primal screams the patient becomes in touch with the pain and thereby rids himself of the need for defensive behavior. In both Transactional Analysis and Primal Therapy the formation of a cohesive and intimate group is played down in favor of an arrangement in which the therapist takes turns working directly with individual members with the cooperation of the rest of the group.

WHAT, after all, can one say about these groups? There is no doubt that the encounter movement has been unfairly criticized on several counts. It has been taken to task for having no standards for its leaders, and while it is true that laymen are favored over professionals, this was equally true of psychoanalysis in its early days. It has been said that groups are often only thinly veiled occasions for sexual encounters, but on those grounds one would have to dismiss quite a few things, a number of important cultural institutions among them. Commercialism? It is unfair to hold an entire movement accountable for Encounter Singles Weekends run at the Concord Hotel. Or the exorbitant fees that leaders receive for weekend marathons? One need only inquire around town about the rates gotten these days by the most orthodox of analysts. Similarly, the arrogance of the movement and its illiteracy. Preoccupation with these questions avoids the central issue: after all is said and done, do people actually change for the better as a result of these experiences? Is behavior actually altered? The encounter movement, in other words, must in the first instance be judged by what it claims to be: a therapy.

Measuring the effects of any therapy or quasi-therapy—a question which has vexed the psychotherapeutic community for many years—is notoriously difficult. Fortunately some careful empirical studies have recently appeared which for the first time make informed judgments possible. In *Encounter Groups: First Facts** Morton A. Lieberman, Irvin D. Yalom, and Matthew B. Miles describe an experiment in which several hundred Stanford University students were divided among seven or eight types of encounter groups: Gestalt, T-Groups, Marathons, Esalen, Synanon, psychodrama, Transactional Analysis, and traditional psychoanalysis. There were sixteen groups in all (two of each kind) as a way of checking whether the outcome was related to particular techniques. Change in behavior was measured by querying not only the participants themselves but also friends who observed them during the duration of the experiment and the follow-up period. An additional feature of the study was the use of a control group of randomly selected young people of the same age and on the same campus, whose psychological growth was measured by the same yardstick applied to the encounterers.

The major finding of this study is that the goals of growth and change so revered by the encounter movement are among its least frequent attainments. Thus, the researchers found that immediately after the group experience 14 per cent of the participants reported that their lives had changed in a significant and positive way; 16 per cent reported having changed negatively or having been badly hurt by the experience; the remainder were either neutral or mildly positive. In a follow-up study six to eight months later, the positive "high changers" had fallen to 9 per cent and the "negative changers" had risen to 18 per cent. Additional findings included the fol-

*Basic Books, 495 pp., $15.00.

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lowing: the control group registered approximately the same degree of progress and regression as the encounterers; there was no correlation between the results and the particular variety of techniques used; the leaders were overly optimistic in evaluating the progress of their groups and, by and large, were not able to identify those who had been reacting badly to the experience.

Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles, psychotherapists committed professionally to the use of groups, are saddened by their findings. They feel that even if some individuals are greatly helped, so high a "casualty rate" simply cannot be justified. Yet the idea of using small groups to foster behavioral change remains, in their view, a fundamentally sound one, and they deplore the way in which, after the blandishments of Esalen and the Marathon, the idea went awry. If the extravagant claims made on behalf of the groups could be reduced, that is, if participants would expect gradual change rather than radical transformation, then, they assert, groups could indeed function as modestly successful tools in helping people grow. In such groups one might realistically expect to learn how to listen to others, to understand how they work in groups, how patterns of leadership and coalition emerge, how one is perceived by others and whether what one means to say is what is actually heard. One could expect to be supported and support others in attempts to change and to break locked patterns of behavior. One could learn to manage the vicissitudes of strong feeling: to be freer in expressing love and anger at their appropriate times. It would, in addition, be proper to hope for the emergence of more confidence in one's own worth, a greater willingness to accept others as they are, and an increased ability to assume responsibility for one's actions and decisions.

This is an attractive notion—in offering it, Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles are obviously bypassing the "human potential" phase of the movement altogether and reaching back to the older institutions of conventional group therapy and the T-Group—but it does not fully explain the striking failure of the encounter movement as it has developed over the last decade to bring about the kinds of change for the better it proclaims as its goal. In fact that failure may be seen as arising out of the essential therapeutic assumptions and techniques of the movement, which tend to frustrate and even to reverse its large aspirations toward health and growth. This inner contradiction (and inevitable disappointment) is evident in several ways.

Encounter's emphasis on the "here-and-now," for one thing, may be useful in helping one to know what at a given moment he really feels. However, as an exclusive focus that proscribes exploration of the past, as it so often is in encounter groups, this stress on the here-and-now can be quite harmful. By atomizing experience into a series of intense, unambivalent, and evanescent sensations it can hinder the development of an identity which coheres over time. While one may be enabled to experience new and changed feelings, there can be little lasting transformation in personality because the changes occur at isolated moments, unconnected to the great weight of past behavior.

Second, total expressivity as a goal of most encounter groups is misleading and confusing. Confessing one's innermost secrets to strangers simply because they are members of a group cheapens the intimacy and commitment which are the proper ends of self-disclosure to particular persons. When it takes the form of criticism of others rather than of shriving of self, the norm of absolute transparency, which demands ruthless honesty with others and no holding back, functions more often than not merely as a sanction for aimless aggression, a dispensation to ignore the question of when this sort of openness works to foster relationship and growth and when it does the opposite.

Third, while an integration of feeling and thinking is certainly desirable, the let-it-all-hang-out ethic of encounter offers little that resembles integration. Because thought, memory, and analysis are played down, the genuine gains which might be made with regard to the emotions remain uninterpreted or not understood, hence ultimately unintegrated as well. Perls's dictum, "lose your mind and become your senses"—disregarding for the moment its invitation to violence and intoxication—dissolves the dialectic between affect and intellect which constitutes the process of growth, and simply replaces one reductive image of man with another.

Finally, the tendency toward less frequent meetings, culminating in the Marathon, encourages a simplistic notion of how people change. Disappearing as a result is any commitment to a long-term, continuous struggle in which cathartic breakthroughs might be consolidated by the hard work of interpretation and analysis. The Marathon, hugging the peaks and eschewing the valleys, leads its followers to believe that such discrete and discontinuous purgations can replace the protracted struggle for real change.

The promise of instant salvation is an unmistakable strain in the rhetoric of encounter groups, and is part of the presumed degeneration of the idea of group therapy decried by Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles. The original intention of the group movement, according to the model these researchers affirm, did not at all have this development in mind. Groups were artificial settings which were supposed to prepare one for life in society. Sensitized and strengthened, participants left the summer workshop or the weekly session in order to re-enter real life, the ongoing life in community. Propaedeutic in function, the group

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and its techniques were geared to preparing one for community rather than constituting an alternative to it. As the unlimited reservoir of "human potential" was discovered and the dramatic catharses multiplied, however, groups tended to become sufficient unto themselves. Growing numbers of "seekers" lived from group to group and regarded encounter experiences as the real life and the spaces between as dead time somehow to be muddled through.

It makes a certain amount of sense in this regard to think of the development of the encounter movement as of that of a historical religion. (This in fact seems implicitly to be the model that Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles have in mind as well.) At its outset, freely developing rituals and symbols yielded direct access to the Ultimate, but as time went on the religious charisma hardened into a church and its symbols became a frozen body of doctrine which revealed more about the church itself than about the God it was supposed to be serving. Similarly, the games and exercises which initially were experimental ways of preparing people for changing their lives eventually became rituals and sacraments whose fixed, cultic performance reflected only themselves. Falling backward into the arms of the group, for instance, an exercise that originally was intended to loosen one up for serious and deep experiences of trust, became instead equivalent to trust itself. A wordless massage to strobe lights was equated with joy, a ritual bartering of reinforcements with love, and the feeling generated from confessing secrets to strangers with intimacy. Catharsis became the obligatory sacrament expected eventually to be taken by all; the group's progress from fear to hate to catharsis to love became the official order of service.

As experiences within the group became codified in this way it became increasingly difficult to deviate from the tightening norms of the group. Encounter leaders speak quite openly about "group pressure," knowing very well the power of the group, its will fixed on a rigid set of expectations, to exact its due. The individual who asserts that the pattern of his growth does not coincide with that of the group and who refuses to come across with the right kind of emotional expression at the right time is subject to one of a number of sanctions available to the group: he might be driven to the edges of psychotic breakdown or he might merely be labeled a "deserter" and forced to stand outside the community of faith.

THE encounter movement, quite apart from its therapeutic aims, must obviously be seen as part of a universal effort in the modern world to restore the gratifications of community and to reinvent serviceable social mythologies. Just how these were lost in the great transformations of secularization and modernization will be endlessly debated, but about the insecurity and unease left in their wake there can be no uncertainty. The social actor, as Talcott Parsons would express it, is no longer fulfilled by his social role—if he ever was in traditional society—and between self and role there has opened up a vast space which is at once anxious and anomic. To fill the void or to build upon it, some use religion, others politics, art, academics, or merely the forgetfulness of bourgeois life.

The encounterers are here also, working away in the same space as the rest of us. But if we are all in trouble, they are in deep trouble, because for them the new social mythologies are not only inadequate, they are altogether beyond reach. There is nothing for the encounterers except the self—the naked self shorn both of its myths and of its work in the world. If community is the prize sorely sought by everyone in the modern world, for the encounterers this can only mean a community of affect, a confederation of nakedness. Previously and elsewhere, the feelings associated with a sense of community—solidarity, trust, intimacy, worthwhileness—came as a by-product of working together for a common purpose. But in the here-and-now one tries to simulate the sense of community independently of the overarching myths of politics, religion, or nation; one tries in the laboratory of the group to synthesize what was originally organic and to make it available not as secondary product but as direct experience. The laboratory, which was once used to observe life, now is used to create artificially that which is more than life.

That successful social relations cannot be founded upon encounter experiences should not in the end come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the ideology of the movement put forth by Maslow and Rogers. At the center of their ideas, outlined above, is the predication of an essentially positive "real self" or "inner nature" which in the healthy person resists the imposition of social roles. Social relations, the family especially, either allow the self to develop naturally or layer upon it artificial identities, but in no case do they form or alter its essential nature. Other persons, therefore, enter the life of the individual as purveyors or deniers of support and love but not as influences which can potentially alter character. Change comes from within and to this process of self-actualization man owes his first allegiance. One has to be who one really is, we are instructed, for anything else would be inauthentic. Spontaneity is an important value because through it the self demonstrates its freedom from external conditioning. The exigencies of spontaneous self-actualization might have untoward consequences on the people around us but these secondary effects must be given a back seat to the primary right to grow. In any case, one need not worry overmuch because, since one's inner nature is inherently good, whatever is genuinely part of its

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unfolding can give little reason for concern. The Kingdom of Heaven is within each person.

Man, as he emerges in this cluster of images, is, simply and baldly, selfish and imperial. Since he is passionately committed to the primary importance of his own autonomy, it is even difficult to understand why he would be interested in a group in the first place, unless mainly as an arena for the emprise of his will. One cannot help sensing here the pathos and irony of trying to extract the gratifications of community from experiences based on a dressed-up version of the old gospel of individualism. The one simply cannot be produced from the other, and in the desperation of the attempt it is possible to glimpse how keen must be the isolation of the individual supposed to be experiencing intimacy within the group.

In the imperious and self-aggrandizing world of encounter, words which once signified profound categories of existence and relationship—authenticity, openness, intimacy, spontaneity, sharing, trust, joy, awareness, growth, freedom—have, in a kind of transvaluation of meaning, taken on an almost opposite significance.* After every "intimate encounter" and every "peak experience," the ensuing depression and isolation give the lie to what went before. More and more people are, in fact, leaving the "growth centers" of Humanistic Psychology for the ashrams of Eastern religion, hoping there to find the myths of consolation denied them in the encounter movement. But while in place of a reductive psychologese Eastern religion can offer the vocabulary of religious mystery, it is unlikely that much in the way of community can be secured there either—beyond, of course, the particular pleasures of obedience to disciplinarian authority, which is the dominant political structure of the new sects.

The consequences of the encounter mentality go beyond frustration and disillusionment: *other* people can get hurt. By assuming the existence of a given inner nature the individual is allowed to believe that parents and social norms affect him only to the degree they impede or expedite his self-realization. The web of social roles that he finds himself ensnared in at present cannot be regarded as other than external to his being: the struggle for growth is the struggle to disentangle and cultivate his real self. Thus his "role" as parent, teacher, writer, social worker, Christian or Jew, is important only in a secondary way and does not have to be submitted to careful scrutiny; in the end, all this is merely the occasion and packaging for what he *really* is. For such an individual, moreover, learning to block out the external pressures that tamper with the growth of the inner self is a process not often conducive to distinguishing between the claims of social conformity and the claims of ethical or religious imperatives—they both come from the outside. Rules of propriety, marital roles, declarations of responsibility, cries for help, taken together as external impositions, have little chance of penetrating the absorption of a person seriously pursuing his self-actualization.

"HUMAN nature," Abraham Maslow wrote in 1954, "is not nearly so bad as it has been thought to be. . . . In fact it can be said that the possibilities of human nature have customarily been sold short." The encounter movement seems to believe that sometime in the early 50's man's "human potential" was "discovered" and that that event carried with it possibilities for the advent of a new stage of civilization. In Carl Rogers's Encounter Society, the discovery of the sensate here-and-now will release the life-affirming energies which have previously been sapped by the historical obsessions and follies of man. In terms of a social and historical vision of man, we have here the Enlightenment's doctrine of perfectibility without its commitment to rationality, Romanticism's exaltation of subjectivity without its acceptance of agony and suffering, the 19th century's scientism without its insistence on the primacy of society. For anyone alive to the contradictions of history, the persistence of so self-assured a vision of man in the second half of the 20th century, with all the willful denials of human reality that vision entails, must be a curious and troubling phenomenon.

In all the talk and practice of encounter perhaps the saddest thing to note, finally, is the absence of any reference to friendship. One can only surmise that since the essence of friendship is commitment over time, and since its practice involves loyalty, faithfulness, and familiarity, the concept must be foreign indeed to those who believe that intimacy is what is shared among strangers during Marathon weekends. In the end, whether or not community emerges in a given group of people depends on the kind of talk that succeeds in becoming central to that group. Talk about ideas is good and sufficient for the classroom and the café, and talk about feelings is good and sufficient for therapy and for lovers. The language of community, however, is situated in a space somewhere in between; it is, ultimately, the language of belief, of value and of faith, a language which turns to intellect and affect without yielding entirely to either.

*It is interesting to note in this connection that the notions of personal relations and human nature enacted within the confines of these groups have recently tended more and more to overflow that setting and, with astonishing preemptive power, to enter the stream of general culture as the new conventional wisdom on these matters. This process, whereby partial and stylized meanings have been rendered absolute and primary, has in effect made an entire vocabulary useless in speaking about how people change.

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# Key West, With Cubans

*Joan Colebrook*

WEDNESDAY, *February 14, 1973*

The bus ride from Miami to Key West is long and slow. There is no passing on the narrow causeway.

From the bus moving southward, Miami appears as a dream city of wide boulevards with a blinding coastline of hotels like great white-iced decorated cakes. Blatant luxury, yet a suggestion of innocence and naiveté. Palms, tulip trees, oranges hanging golden among dark enameled leaves. A tourist house where the landlady, at once kindly and primitive, has rich, smooth, healthy flesh (along with the strange idea that the spirit of her dead husband swoops over her head in the person of a pet lovebird).

At the crossroads near the tourist house (where Biscayne bisects 25th) a Floridian atmosphere is somehow established; on one corner a hair-weaving establishment displaying photographs of gentlemen (*Before*, quite bald; *After*, with a mod hairdo); on the second, a reddish-painted International House of Pancakes (a harmless witch's cottage with gables, a pale blue roof, and shutters); on the third, a solid Spanish-influenced church; and on the fourth, a plant shop—its windows filled with pots of palm, cacti, and tropical vines, with boxes of grapefruit and oranges, with bags of pecans and candies made of coconut. (This last a reminder both of the never-ending stream of tourists and of the fact that "Retired America" lives in this city, that flowers and gifts are in high demand for hospitals, rest homes, and funerals.)

Inside the House of Pancakes a pleasant sense of democracy—a flood of customers includes sinewy black men from the construction sites nearby, pretty girls with snub noses, tanned oldsters, young men in service uniforms who drive delivery vans. They all settle down to eat pancakes with every conceivable accompaniment: with scrambled eggs, with grits, with sausages, with honeys and syrups, with strawberries, loganberries, or apples, with cinnamon and spiced oranges. The neat, self-possessed, buxom black waitress in her salmon-colored uniform, hair tied with colored wool, appears the next day transformed into a cashier in a smart dark pants suit.

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THE bus leaves this behind; moves past Coral Gables, Key Largo, Tavernier, Islamorada, Craig, Marathon, Bahia Honda, Spanish Harbor, Ramrod Key, Pirate's Cove. All is flatness. The end of the land is in sight. Leaving behind the heavy continent, leaving behind the big shopping centers, the hotels, the banks, Quik-cheks, Mobile Homes for sale. Soon, like barnacles clinging to every available piece of land, come the tourist camps, the boatels, the occasional small white coral sand roads leading through stunted pines to some further extremity (also loaded with camps, trailers, piers, shacks selling fishing gear). Names like Coral Way, Salty Dog Lodge, Pirate's Harbor, Oyster Camp, and Joe's Bait.

Now expanses of water interspersed with little islands of mangrove, mud, and coral sand. A sense of sky. Inside the bus an already familiar isolation. A few lady tourists in summer dresses and straw hats. Some tough-skinned fishermen with their gear. A Cuban family with a much-petted baby who shakes the bells on her shoes. Hippies with their bundles and bed-rolls. . . . Another causeway. The water gets bluer; and closer to the causeway it is palish marble stirred to pewter by recent rains. Arriving at Key West, where the damp sea air mingles with the warmth of late evening, we find a close-packed town in an area of about three miles by five (population 40,700 in 1970). The ever-predominating sky is black and gold over tin roofs and palms. Here is the "Land's End" of North America.

*Thursday, February 15*

A charming Texan pilot provides a free view of the town from his training plane; the broken line of keys curves like some mysterious message in hieroglyphics. Otherwise we stare at history sketched in strategic terms. A sea once swept clean of pirates by Commodore David Porter; the ruins of Fort Jefferson; the round red-bricked forts of the Civil War; three steel tripods put up for radio transmitters during World War I; the docks from which the USS *Key West P.F. 17* set out to convoy in World War II; an airfield where Hawk missiles were deployed during the Korean

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War and the missile buildup in Cuba. The pilot has a slow voice, says that his wife out in Texas wishes he'd give up flying and stay home. "But I *like* these machines."

Back at the docks a Coast Guard cutter moored against its background of blue water, and decorated by screaming gulls, is one of those which generally takes in tow the boats holding Cuban refugees. The straw-hatted guide speaking to a docile group of tourists points out a collection of boats on the docks—rowboats, little fishing boats, battered rafts made of inner tubes. In a loud proprietary voice, and sweeping his arm toward these inadequate craft, he announces: "All these used by Cubans seeking refuge on our shores!"

THE Cuban story since Castro can be told by waves of fleeing human beings: 1959 when Batista's supporters fled, late 1959 and 1960 when it became clear that Castro was a Communist, 1962 during the missile crisis, the large-scale exodus from 1965 onward, and again this year, 1973, when the airlift was renewed.

The human story is something else again, for those refused permission to leave (the young, strong, and useful) try desperate methods. In 1962 three young men of twenty-two, twenty-three, and twenty-four drift for seven days on a raft of inner tubes, along with a seventeen-year-old woman and her four children. After five days there is no more water; the tender skin of the children is terribly burned. In 1969 a boy alone in a rowboat who says he was "frightened all the way." In 1972 a twenty-four-year-old is picked up off Key Largo, delirious from drinking salt water. He has floated for fifteen days in an inner tube, says that eight others have been lost at sea. (There had originally been seven other men and one woman, some of whom had become frightened and, wanting to return, had cut the tapes which bound the tubes together.) One of the men had been eaten by "a fish." The survivor had prayed that "the animals of the sea" might not get him. The same year five people row across in a tiny boat. In July an 18-foot twin-engine boat gets to Key Lobos with sixteen people (when supplies and water are gone they suddenly see the Lobos Light). The guide tells his *compadre,* "We did it . . . we did it because I talked to God!" In January of this year a bus arrives at Freedom House in Miami, and Emelina de la Fé, aged sixty-eight, sobs and laughs as she cries: "There they are, my two daughters and my six grandchildren!" She is one of eighty-five arriving on the recently renewed airlift (the 2,999th flight to make the trip from Varadero Beach since 1965). One man throws himself to the ground and kisses the earth.

Most of these refugees come penniless, with little but the clothes they stand up in, armed only with passports and birth certificates.

(The story is told in Miami of a young black Cuban who reported that Castro's police, in reviewing his application for exile, asked him what he would do in the U.S. when the Yankees went after him with police dogs. He answered boldly; "Nothing—I'll just roll up the windows of my Cadillac!" This dream of vast prosperity is only realized in a limited number of emigré cases—but in general the Cubans are doing well. According to the study of a Florida Atlantic University professor, Dr. Rafael Probias, more than half of the 612,648 Cuban refugees in the United States are resettled outside of Florida and in all of the states—there are 98,479 in New York City for instance. Greater Miami's Latin population will reach 428,000 by 1975, and of these 83.3 per cent are Cubans, enjoying a per-capita income three times that of any Latin American country. Thirty-nine per cent of the Cubans are now homeowners, 20 per cent professionals, and many of them, in the common rags-to-riches syndrome of the U.S., are leaving the streets of Little Havana—also known as the Saguesera or South West—to move to suburbs like Village Green, South Miami Heights, and Carol City. In spite of this, when you ask them what they find here, "liberty" is the word they most often use.)

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THE rooming-house is run by a woman generally known as "Gladys." As active as a teen-ager, she scurries around in Bermuda shorts and an always fresh and ironed blouse. Although she seems part of that intermingling of personalities which makes up an unpretentious ramshackle island past, Gladys is not a Conch. (The word Conch, literally derived from the shellfish once consumed as a staple, and pronounced "Konk," is the name given to long-term Key West inhabitants as opposed to mainlanders, newcomers, tourists, and recent refugees.) Superimposed upon this matrix of islanders is a new tourist consumer society; its demands creating ever-more-expensive motels that feature wall-to-wall carpets, Miami decor, swimming pools, spotlights amid the foliage, charcoal-grilled steaks, and gaudy advertising of Dadeland's "Frost-Free Keys."

In the town itself a grid of streets and numerous humble tin-roofed cottages, some with doorways curtained in the Caribbean manner. These interspersed with dignified old wooden houses, half lost in tangled tropical gardens; houses made by master builders familiar with an island architecture influenced by the Spanish, the French, the British, the Dutch. The term "Tropical Gothic" could apply to these tall roofs and steeples, the white-painted iron gates, the decorative wood tracery, gay cornices, steep eaves down which rain could pour into underground cisterns.

On the main drag (Duval and Simonton Streets) people and cars moving slowly. "Yes

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ma'am, it's a fur piece to the square," says an old dark lady in a bright yellow cotton dress and carrying a violet umbrella. Past the Big Mama Bar where island blacks (who are mostly descendants of Bahamians) gather in the semidusk of the interior. A boy sits wearing a tight shirt and pants and a floppy hat edged with red. The arms of the bartender gleam in the stripe of sunlight. A peep show featuring "Sex to Sexty." A small garden with crotons, and a few empty beer cans scattered under the seats. Dress shops. A church (1842, the "oldest" in Key West), brilliantly white with two imitation bell-towers. On an opposite corner some distance down a pinkish-red brick bank with a fancy rococo underhang trimmed with white. Around the corner an old square and many trees. The name Florida after all means flowering, suggests the "wild green growth" that Ponce de León raved about. Perhaps not the time now for abundant flowers, but the bauhinias are in bloom, looking like extravagant purple and white orchids. It makes a difference that at the end of each street the sea lies. This gives a faint edge of excitement and movement to a flat terrain.

*Friday, February 16*

In the El Paso restaurant under bluish lights, around a big imitation marble counter, watched over, so to speak, by huge photographs of Havana in former days, sit a number of Cuban refugees—fishermen, carpenters, *campesinos*, one or two *politicos*. A few of them attack large platters of rice with saffron and black beans, *carne asada* or *pollo*. Others drink coffee or beer, call across to each other in rapid-fire Spanish and down the room to the men playing pool in the back. Antonio, the man who serves, is smiling and good-natured, addressing each woman customer in his low voice: "*Qué quieres mi vida?*" From the kitchen the cook, Raul Betancourt, takes time out to come and stab with his finger at the Seville Hilton in one of the pictures on the wall, and declare that he cooked *there* before he came to the El Paso. A little bearded fisherman called Jesús, and another called Moises (small, neat, with wide-apart eyes, his hair in a ducktail, his shirt bright pink with lavender stripes). Moises explains: "My grandmother and seven brothers came with me in the boat—it was two days and two nights, and one night there was a big wind. Then we were afraid." On the other side of the bar a tall strong-looking dark Cuban, his nose almost flat to his face, his wine-colored velvet beret with a tassel glistening against dark skin. When he moves you see that his flaring pants are striped with leather.

A thin-chested, not-so-young woman, with a backwoods accent and rusty blondish hair, orders coffee. "*Si mi vida,*" murmurs the agile Antonio. The woman offers a cigarette and reveals that there is a good deal of fun when the shrimp boats come in. "Lots of awful good-lookin' Cuban fellers! I tell *you*." She rolls her eyes upward.

A youngish boy with a long brown bob appears—flaring pants, a cowboy jacket, and a hat with a high crown. Raul, temporarily out of the kitchen, explains: "Cuban hippie."

THERE is talk about what one eats in Cuba now. Another fisherman called Illuminado states: "Three pounds of rice a month, half a pound of *frejoles*, a quarter of a pound of meat a week . . . a little bread if you are lucky. Milk if you're six years old." The group gathers around to inform me of conditions. "Cuba is no good now. Is worse." An expressive shrug from Illuminado. "No money, no shoes, no clothes, no coffee . . . and much much work." The Cuban "hippie" begins to dance a little with his heavy block-heeled shiny shoes.

Since the fishermen were not the middle-class, not rich, not bourgeois, had not Castro intended to better their lot? Illuminado shrugs and admits that this may have been his intention.

(Memories of Jean-Paul Sartre's book written in the first flush of the revolution, published in 1961, a curiously superficial book but giving some sense of the pathos of Castro's inability to handle the changes generated. Importuned by crowds of excited people demanding this or that advantage, he complains to Sartre: "They demand everything of us . . . since we routed the mercenaries they think that we are capable of everything." What Sartre doesn't mention are the steadily mounting repressions which Castro inaugurates and which erode both the quality of life and economic productivity. . . . Ten years later, 1971, Castro admits to a desperate economic situation and says that the "lack of productivity is a bottomless pit.")

Illuminado says realistically, "If *El Caballo* [Fidel] tried to help us, then he failed. He failed because his ideas didn't work out; but he couldn't admit it and kept the idea all the same." Into the silence someone adds, "He lied to the people." Antonio says that the reason it became so much worse for the fishermen—quite apart from the general worsening of conditions in Cuba itself, quite apart from all the people shot, or running away, or in prison—was that even the little boats were taken and switched about to different areas so as to sunder all personal ownership. After that, they, the fishermen, were all only slaves of the state. They had to work longer and longer hours for less and less food. "Because we complain he called us *enemigos*."

Moises adds: "They could take our children."

*Saturday, February 17*

Down Whitehead Street from the most southerly point on U.S. territory. Here the shell-sellers are black against the horizon, the pink mouths of the conch shells reflect whatever golden light

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is in the sky. Surfaces glimmer with gold, rose, violet. Out of the sun under an arc of trees the shadows are inky. Small cottages have touches of pastel color; newel posts painted indigo blue, ironwork painted yellow.

A little old lady, coffee-colored with pepper and salt hair screwed up into a bun, sits on a high verandah in her clean black-and-white print dress, and as people pass she points to a notice printed on the back of an old cardboard carton. The letters are uneven and straggling. LADY BEWARE. PURSE SNATCHERS ARE ABOUT. CARRY NO MONEY OR VALUABLE ON THE STREET. A THIEF CAME BEHIND ME AND SNATCHED MY PURSE. I hear that such robberies are being blamed—rightly or wrongly—on the influx of "hippies," who are "taking the place over." The woman at the corner fruit store states that a robbery in her store was done by the hippies who inhabit a large old house nearby. How does she know it was the hippies? "They're hungry that's why. Whoever heard of a real thief taking only food, and leaving the money in the till? They think that if they only take what they need, then that's OK. . . . Well, they've got another think coming!" Aggressively she piles up the oranges and bananas. "The Vietnam war's over and they can't blame their stealing on that any longer!"

In a storefront farther down I see how these so-called hippies or "long-hairs" are looking for new ways of making a living. An olive-skinned young man with romantic curls cascading about naked shoulders doesn't think he'll ever go back to Topeka, Kansas. He is preserving and mounting crayfish. The mottled brown creatures with their small feelers tipped with pink are spread before him and he injects them with some sort of chemical and then places them carefully on pieces of driftwood. He also sells a species of tree orchid, and his eyes shine as he digs into a big tome on tropical plants, and investigates the habits of airbreathers. In the same genre the young second cook at the Midget Bar hides his sensitive face behind thick lenses, and his Donatello-like torso, only seen at the beach, underneath an oversize shirt someone had thrown away. His name is Tom, and he proclaims his discovery that "people" are the important thing, "people getting together with people." He adds that he has decided to be a cook so that he can ship out from here (perhaps on a shrimp boat) and make his living all over the globe ("wherever there are people they have to eat"), landing eventually on some island where it will be possible to experience new variants of *la dolce vita*.

A DUSTY blue wagon, filled with long-haired men and girls, draws up near the sidewalk to ask the way to Mallory Square; in return for a town map I am rewarded with dazzling smiles. The two girls are of unattractive complexion, but their bodies are supple and thin in shirts without bras and tight tattered jeans embroidered with rainbows. The male driver looks out of enormous brown trustful eyes almost hidden by locks dull with Southern dust. He says that they have come from Gainesville. How is it in Gainesville? He answers in a slow dreamy voice, "A free school, a co-op, everything. The people are *really* getting it together."

At the El Paso the usual Cuban group are drinking their beer or their small cups of *café chicas*. A tiny man with a small straw hat pulled over his wise nutcracker face, sips at his beer and swings his foot in a dapper, polished white shoe. Raul, the cook, says that the other's name is *El Panquelero*, that he actually has it engraved on a bracelet around his wrist, plus the date of his birth which is 1898. (There is no chance to verify this story.) Beside him sits a big dark Cuban in a yellow shirt and a tasselled beret, who is known as Felix *el negro* (there is another Felix in town who is white and known as Felix *el blanco*).

Raul begins to talk about José Martí y Pérez, the Cuban poet and "Apostle of Independence" who, according to a plaque on a house on the corner, came to Key West in 1892 and received here "the homage of the Key West Lodge of the Republic of Cuba."

(A reminder that Key West has been a point of contact for rebel Cubans since the second half of the 19th century, that here refugees came to escape the repressions after the early uprisings against the Spanish, that here many later revolutionary actions were projected, that in the first Key West cigar factories the cigar-makers formed the hard-core of the radical exile movement in the South. . . . Naturally enough when the time came, and before *his* revolution, Fidel Castro also visited Key West—to make propaganda, to gather followers, to organize support.)

*Sunday, February 18*

Windy Sunday, wild with the swaying of palms.

Captain Tony's bar is half-dark, built like a barn with big wooden doors. A fireplace with a slow red fire. Beside this fire sits a curious, despairing-looking figure wrapped in a big green blanket. Apart from a couple of tourists the customers are youngish men and girls, hunched over the worn, polished wood of the bar, their faces occasionally catching the glint of dim red lights. The well-known blue jeans, sailor jackets, flowered shirts, wool caps, stitched Greek or Mexican blouses. The long red undulating hair of the girl bartender. In the ladies' room a scribbler has written: DICK SHOULD HAVE PULLED OUT LIKE HIS FATHER SHOULD HAVE.

Bernard, a strong-featured young man with a shoulder-length bob and short beard, like a Jewish Viking. Big luminous eyes. Talks of poetry. He has published some, but is modest about his talents. I ask whether there are other writers in Key West. He says reprovingly: "You and I and

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Tennessee Williams." Discussion follows across the bar about places to stay. Bernard says that the night before he had taken a girl to a motel, and refuses to pay that sort of price again. He had picked the girl up at Louie's. She was in distress of some sort, cried, and wanted only "to go to a good motel and watch color TV." "So I took her." "Did you pay?" "Yes," he admits. Later, after a few drinks, he says that the night before he had "hustled." I wondered how he felt about it? "Humiliated," he admitted, "being turned down all the time." As he lifts his glass of tequila one notices how small and white and exquisite his hands are. But his voice is low and very slow; the factor lacking seems to be exuberance and/or aggression. (Sophisticated in so many ways, he seems to be without some essential knowledge as a child is.) He'd been to Europe, to Mexico, to Africa, in the course of various "phases"—a "drop-out" phase, a "Europe with-a-divorced mother" phase, a "Marxist" phase, an "LSD" phase, a "MacLean" (a Boston mental hospital) phase. In Paris he'd lived for a year with the widow of a very well-known writer. He says that he is twenty-five (quick arithmetic: the woman concerned must have been at least in her mid-fifties). Now he is restless. Has had a girlfriend for a year, but begins to feel "suffocated." He shifts a little on the stool, an almost imperceptible but eloquent movement; and says in the same slow voice, "I've got that dissociated feeling."

Back in the ladies' room I notice for the first time a small crabbed comment high up on the wall: ECCENTRICS SUFFER FROM THE CURSE OF IMPERMANENCE.

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IN THE late afternoon I pass an enormous ceiba tree on the grounds of a town school; its roots thrown up so far from the ground that they look like the crouching limbs of an animal. (Reminder of how close we are here to all the islands of the Caribbean, and to the Peninsula of Yucatan as also to the rest of the Mexican Mayan area where the ceiba—kapok—tree was worshiped as the "Tree of Life.")

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EATING scrambled eggs in the Mini, am approached by a couple—a lanky young man with an excessively broad face (blond hair gone from the forehead leaving it domed, bare, and sunburned) and a rather pretty Jewish girl who claims that they are just "hanging out" down here, but that if anything "bad" happens, her "family" will always come to her aid. The girl talks expansively, rapidly, and without structure, her meager stock of words assisted by phrases like "you know" and "I mean."

More eggs are ordered. The girl stares moodily ahead with big black eyes and talks about Anais Nin and the importance of women keeping journals. How is she going to solve the economic problem while she's writing journals? Well, she thinks she'll make a living by giving abortions, that it's quite easy, and why should a woman pay "like $125 when she can get one for $25." "All you have to do," she adds, "is use the suction method, like stick this thing in, and there you are." The young man with her says that he's intending to make some money by carpentering perhaps. He looks ready to fall asleep; finally gets groggily to his feet, says he has to "crash," that they'd driven for twenty-two hours without stopping. The girl is still talkative and alert.

As another couple with long streaming hair approach us and ask for cigarettes, an exchange of information is at once set up; about sleeping on the beaches, about the names of other good places to "crash," and about how "it's on" with the Key West police.

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IN THE darkness the rustle of palm fronds. In the middle of the night the sudden hissing of rain as if someone had turned buckets of water upside down on the tin roof. An insistent drumming evoking the nostalgia of the tropics. Half-forgotten memories of the Pacific Islands where rusty roofs eternally resist the rain, where palm trees bend along the beaches.

*Monday, February 19* (Washington's Birthday)

José Martí, the poet, inherits the whole Cuban tradition of nationalistic feeling. Arrested for revolutionary activities at the age of seventeen, he never forgot that first penitentiary where, as the prisoners passed up the street on their way to work in the quarries, the sound of the clanking of their chains silenced the cafés. Nor did he forget the sight of his first flogged prisoner, the back striped and covered with blood, the skin white with the lime of the mines. Afterward as an exile he was to go to Spain, to Santo Domingo, to Mexico, to Haiti, to Jamaica, to Honduras, to Costa Rica and Panama; to develop a sense that it was his mission to found a nation of Cuban exiles.

*I am a simple man*
*From where the palm grows. . . .*

*I come from all parts*
*And go to all parts.*

BECAUSE it is a holiday the El Paso is closed, and many of the customers sit in the Two Brothers, the café across the street where toward noon people come in to eat big bowls of white-bean and black-bean soup with hunks of Cuban bread. Above the grill there is a very realistic plaster statue of the Virgin Mary blessing a boat holding three fishermen, an appropriate image in this town of refugees by water. The waves of the sea are standing straight up in

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points; and the waitress says that the image is known as *La Caridad de Cuba.*

Raul explains that his political ideas had been democratic, but he'd joined in the fight against Batista hoping that the Castro government would be an improvement. We are drinking vermouth in the liquor store and the owner of the store is translating.

People were beginning to leave Cuba, Raul explains, and Fidel sent out a call for those with some education to fill in the gaps in the schools. They made him a schoolmaster, he says, for $30 a month. I ask what he had to teach, and he removes his glasses, looks down his long curved nose and says: *"La dictatura del proletariat."* He laughs and says that he lad lain rather low. When he finally applied to leave they let him do so because of his age and health difficulties, but told him that if he ever came back, cook as he was, they would *"cocinar"* (fry) him.

He describes the time of the killing of the Batistianos; the system of killing was very spontaneous, no question of real trials, or of any justice. The accused men had their hands tied, and were put against the wall. The spectators were deliberately worked up, and it was like the French Revolution. Here was an enemy of the people, what to do with him? "Kill him," called the crowd. *"Como el Coliseo de Roma,"* Raul says. The victim would be placed with his head sticking out of a window, and the crowd would deliver the verdict. After that Raul was in Guantanamo and saw people who had been shot, and the bodies buried with the heads sticking out of the ground—"to satisfy the people." Raul had protested. He had gone to the priest and together they had come and buried some of the bodies properly. He adds that those in prison now are no longer Batistianos, but ex-Fidelistas. (Ironically the counsel who had defended Castro himself in the Moncada Barracks case—Dr. Carlos Penar Justiz—was one of those who defended forty-three of Batista's pilots; and he warned the court that the travesty of the trials would make Castro the "new Napoleon of the Caribbean.")

AT TONY'S a sense of familiarity. The same draped figure huddled in the blanket by the fire like some medieval statue of Penitence. The same Bernard thoughtfully drinking tequila. The same girl with the red hair.

This time, however, a beautiful young man with a hairdo of sculptured silver and a slight rosy flush to a roundish face. Through the open door we can see a red Continental. "That's his." "His or hers?" someone asks. "Well *hers* then."

Bernard describes his mother. Charming, intelligent, absolutely elegant. "When she was divorced we'd go to bars together. I was her escort in Europe. Then some man'd come along and I was forgotten. It got me pretty confused because no girl could quite come up to her." He smiles.

The boy with the silver hairdo goes out. A moment later he is followed by a tall stiff-faced man in a long black coat.

No one but Bernard seems to be talking. The girl bartender with the red hair is at the other end serving a sailor, looking with that red spread over her shoulders like some fantastic Munch painting. Down near the pool table two men are bent over a chessboard.

*Tuesday, February 20*

On the beach. The water paler than the North, the small waves milky with powdered coral. Fascinating to watch the pelicans, floating in groups, then wheeling into the air together, and one by one, turning slightly sideways, diving —beaks completely straight—into the water. The thick medieval-looking beaks cleave the sea. The heavy bodies follow with a plopping sound.

In company with their children and dogs, the "long-hairs" congregate in special areas. In contrast to the routine tourists who sit in chairs, anoint themselves with oil, gaze through telescopic lens, and then go to eat in restaurants, these sun-lovers are already brown from long exposure and generally pass their time in inarticulate philosophical discussions; in the meantime eating out of paper bags, or tearing off hunks of the good wheat bread sold to them by pretty girls who peddle it from bicycles.

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A GIANT sea-grape, its root washed by the tide, a true coral-lover. A vantage point from which to look southeast across waters where courageous sailors of all nations once fought one another from smoking decks for the possession of small scraps of land strategically important to the colonial world. Formerly it had seemed charming to go to Martinique, to look at a girl dressed *en doudou,* her *foulard* over the left shoulder, her *madras* arranged according to the state of her heart. To visit Dominica and search for those of Carib blood; Haiti, where the fortress of Jean Christophe apes the castles of Europe, but where old French songs are recast in African form; Cuba, where the drums and dances of the Congo sound in the replicas of Spanish squares. Now old misalliances dissolve under their own weight. British justice, French rationality, the Danish sense of government, the Spanish civic talent—all seem about to be submerged under the glassy water as in some ancient fairy story.

The proximity of these islands to the U.S. makes Key West a symbolic contact point. . . . It is necessary to resist reading about Diego de Velasquez and Juan de Grijalva and Sir Walter Raleigh and the Empress Josephine and turn instead to translating the language of the "Third World," the declarations of emancipating minorities—Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chinese.

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It is the time of "people" politics; the time to regard, objectively if possible, new cults of the anti-white.

A PHONE conversation with Señora Padilla who is now living in Miami, and is the mother of the poet Herberto Padilla Lorenzo. If Martí was a poet of Cuba's past, Padilla is a poet of Cuba's present; although he has been in trouble with the leadership, especially, since 1968, when he published a poem called "Cuban Poets Dream No More." Thirty-nine years old, a former newspaperman, influenced by Auden and Spender and by Antonio Machado, Padilla asserted in 1968 that only mediocre work was being published by the Cuban establishment. This cost him his job on *Granma* (the government English-language newspaper).

*Cuban poets dream no longer*
*(not even at night)*
*They close the door to write alone*
*When suddenly the wood creaks;*
*The wind buffets the garret;*
*Hands seize them by the shoulder. . . .*

In March of 1971 Padilla was arrested by Castro and released only after he had signed a confession, one of those abject documents with which the West has become familiar from the Stalinist trials in the 30's and the Slansky trials in the 50's.

*I wanted to call attention to myself, to profit from the scandal. I wanted to be the only writer with a political mind in Cuba . . . to try to impose my ideas. . . . I who had not achieved anything either before or after the Revolution . . . my egocentrism was growing by leaps and bounds . . . my vanity had no limits . . . I came to write insidious and provocative poems. . . . I have been tremendously ungrateful . . . it seems to me incredible that I could have thought that this sickly bundle of papers . . . could have some intellectual and human worth. . . . Only the vanity and petulance of considering myself. . . .*

—And so on.

(The question of political action is more than the question of integrity; it is closely bound up with the mystery of human desire, with dreams and with ambition. It was both the strength and the weakness of the Russian Revolution that it was to mean different things to those experiencing it within and to those experiencing it without. Those who viewed it from without were slow to accept its rumored corruption. Their revolutionary zeal—fighting a rearguard action—sought to create a new illusion to take the place of the old. So that when they lost hope in the Russian Revolution, they simply substituted the Chinese, or the Cuban. . . . What is lacking in this ready substitution, is an understanding of the hypnotic and fantasy-like quality of the Marxist ideology itself.)

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A CUBAN lawyer and ex-Major, Orlando Garcia, short, with squarish shoulders and an alert squarish face, is now the paymaster at the Key West Welfare Department (which also houses the Aid to Cuban Refugees Committee). When Castro took power he stayed with the Fidelistas, hoping, as he says, "that it was all for the good of Cuba." He had been in San Antonio de los Baños with the 10th Infantry Regiment, and Fidel had declared that the army must be "clean," that all brutality and corruption must be wiped out. "Now I think that they were only trying to confuse us, to bring in Communism so that we couldn't follow their steps." He goes on: "Being a lawyer I was asked by Che and Raul to help make new laws for the Revolution. Che would say: 'You are a lawyer and so you make things very complicated. When I [Che] was in Oriente in Santiago de Cuba, I killed sixty or seventy men, and also Raul did the same. We killed all those people and there was no criminal procedure, no courts, no laws.' I said to him, 'That's all very well, but that was war; now there's peace and you must have some laws.' "

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A SENSE of dislocation at leaving the serious Cuban struggle to go downtown to the Midget Bar, presided over by two large pictures—one showing a scene of black seas with white meringue-like waves and a pale moon; the other showing black ships sailing into a scarlet sky (the sort of art which has been described as "so bad it's good"). Tom, the young man with the Donatello torso and the thick lenses, is putting in time here (and sleeping in his station wagon) until he can work as a cook. Key West is better than a big city, he thinks. An expert electrician, he says he could be in Concord, California right now making $9 an hour! He lounges against the wall, his smallish face decorated by a reddish-brown handlebar mustache. "You see, I couldn't get my feelings together and tried everything—well, some people travel with boys, but I can't get that on, I love females." He gives a hopeless sigh, drops twenty-five cents into the slot in the pool table, and racks the colored balls.

*Wednesday, February 21*

I go to visit the Garcia family who live under the rusted iron roof on the top floor opposite the El Paso. Warm family atmosphere; photographs of the children stretching out in even rows on the living-room wall. In the flesh all appear extravagantly healthy. Rosa, the married daughter, rocks a plump smiling baby. Teresa (seventeen), Anna (fourteen), and Margaret or Maria (twelve) are all doing their homework. And they

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all speak good English. The Señora, still pretty with a dimple in her cheek like Anna's, speaks only Spanish and is busy getting supper, emerging from the kitchen from time to time to add a rapid effective word. The family crossed from Cuba in a new boat with a stolen rudder, in full daylight, setting off on a Sunday as if they were going to fish. This was in 1963. Other fishermen came with them, making twenty-one in all. "And a dog," adds Maria.

Raymond, who is sixteen, and an especially strong ruddy-faced boy in denim overalls, says that they left because it was all too much—the pressures, the work, the lack of food, and the surveillance. "Mama would sit in the kitchen at night and listen to them patrolling the area, and she was frightened that for some reason they'd take away the kids."

WHO were they "for" at first, I ask in Spanish, for Batista or for Castro? The Señora comes running from the kitchen, her face flushed from the stove. *"Para nadie,"* she cries throwing out her hands, *"a lo menos a Fidel!"* (For no one, but especially not for Fidel.) As they get warmed up to the subject they all gather closer. The light shines on their faces. Maria, though only twelve, is almost a big calm Señora like her mother. Rosa, who sits rocking the sleepy baby, has a non-dramatic "American" manner. Teresa is writing a "presentation" and gets on with it seriously. Little Pedro (nine) had not yet existed when they crossed the water, and is so blond that they call him *el Americano.* Maria has her hair done with three small plaits on both sides held together with glittering amber barrettes. She has about her broad golden-skinned face a look of those Indian women painted by Spaniards who sent back the record of the Conquest of Mexico to the court in Spain.

This family is united in everything: its struggle to adapt to a new country, to advance, to share in the old "upward mobility." Raymond will be a computer analyst, Teresa will go to the university. Like many other refugee families they have brought to the U.S. a kind of home life which here seems to be on the decline. Raymond says to me earnestly: "Before we left on the boat to cross the water, my father said to us, 'Perhaps we will die—but if we die, we all die together.' "

*Thursday, February 22*

New Cuban acquaintances turn up every day —each with his own story of terror and flight. The lawyer from Miami with accounts of interrogation at G2. The craggy-looking fisherman, George Lopez, so many of whose friends began to disappear, and who was wrecked during his escape and only survived by catching seabirds when it got dark. The doctor René Fernandez Lopez, whose twenty-seven-year-old nephew was shot in Havana because he knocked down a policeman who called him a *gusano* (*gusano* means a species of tree worm, and is interpreted in Cuba as "traitor." In a speech in 1961 in the Sierra Maestro, Castro said: "We will shake the rotten trees and the *gusanos* will drop out"). These and other stories disturb the tranquility of the tropical days and nights. It is a little like being in Israel where so many citizens have spent time in concentration camps.

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WHILE the local Cubans struggle one way or another to forget their devastating experiences and to adapt to a new reality, the so-called "hippies" concern themselves with unseating whatever realities they don't care for.

At the Midget young men and women mill around the bar and the pool table—under the huge scenes of *Day* and *Night.* "One time in California," Tom, the aspiring cook is saying, "I was really bummed on out and down, just wanted to get away . . . this girl I was more or less *not* living with because we couldn't get our ideas together . . . well she went to SF and I took off for Texas."

A tall gangling man puts two full bottles of beer on the bar near us. "For free," he states solemnly. "I never did get into a lot of psychedelics," Tom is explaining, "but I did share a house in the Bay Area with people in different stages of drugs—one guy got himself a $100-a-day habit, someone else was heavy on speed. I was very depressed, and couldn't get my feelings together for the opposite sex. I got heavy into thinking and let my thoughts get in the way of my doin' . . . it was all heavy in my mind." His brow furrows painfully. There seems no way out of a turgid self-involvement.

*Friday, February 23*

Dawn. The water beyond the end of Whitehead Street pellucid. A single pelican sailing slowly.

On one of his earliest trips to the American South, John James Audubon had come to the Keys. He had dreamt of something like this in Paris, as he picked his way through dirty streets and gutters filled with black water. Son of Jean Audubon, a sea captain and slave dealer, and his Santo Domingo mistress, transported to France as a child and brought up by his father's legal wife, Audubon had the "New World" in his blood. During this visit to the Keys he sailed into mangrove inlets where hundreds of pelicans swam. He surprised purple heron and white ibis ("my heart leapt"). He came upon cormorant nests made of tough twigs, and upon masses of seaweed, the refuse of feeding turtles. He spent his days drawing and painting, slept in a hammock in his guide's house, was disturbed by the sailors dancing and fiddling in the next room. And he dreamt of the "great heron."

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BY MIDDAY the pelican has gone.

On the beach long conversations with the hippies, who spread their blankets, share their food and drink, and talk of the route they follow. Some have been to Jamaica, some to Colombia. A tall, sunburned, curly-headed man has a beautiful four-year-old daughter just shipped to him from New York. "I'd like to be a father all the time, but her mother thinks she shouldn't have her school interrupted." The little girl is white-skinned and plump, and calls "Daddy, Daddy" as she jumps into his arms. "My wife's got custody. She went to the court and told how Marie had taken a drag from a marijuana joint—I like my weed—and my wife thought this was a terrible thing. I don't think it would hurt her, it might even be good for her." How had he lived in Jamaica? "Ah, that's a lovely place. To the west there's a long beach, nobody there much; we lived with the natives, shared their food and everything." He goes on to say that he has been in jail in Colombia. "It was a good experience." What had he been doing in Colombia to get into jail? "Dealing," he answers briefly.

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THAT night at the Garcia house everyone is watching television. The light-haired Pedro, true to his nickname *el Americano,* insists on finding a Western. The Señora, resting from the day's housework, sits with her hands in her lap and talks of how it was in Cuba, the difficulties of moving around, of getting the daily food, of being happy.

In a low voice, as if some hostile person were listening, the Señora tells of how they were constantly watching you—especially at night because this was the time when you might try to escape. She had had a brother who was in prison for two years, but they finally let him go. Her sister's husband was known to be against Castro's regime, but being competent, he was asked to work for the government. He refused. Soon they came to search his house but found nothing. Later one night they came and took him. The Señora is almost whispering now. She tells how in two or three days they returned and said that he had killed himself. But someone who saw the body said that he had been strangled or hung. . . . After that, *"No podía dormir por la noche Señora,"* she tells me, *"uno podía oir a los milicianos caminañdo . . . caminañdo. . . ."* (I couldn't sleep at night, Señora, you could hear the soldiers walking, walking.) She says that she began to have terrible nightmares of trying to escape with the children and being chased by Castro's police. *"Por el dia me dije que era bien, pero por la noche era muy diferente, era muy malo. . . ."* (In the daytime I told myself it was all right, but at night it was bad, bad.)

*Saturday, February 24*

Rain again. The sea the color of old glass bottles which are sold to tourists, and are of opaque, very pale milky blue. A tangle of masts from the small shrimp vessels—*St. Laurent,* Tampa; *Virgalona,* Key West; the *Kenny G.; Bright Star.* A sea-food bar filled with tourists earnestly eating oysters, shrimp, fish. There is a notice on the wall saying, "If you've got the time we've got the beer."

*Monday, February 26*

A burning day after the rain. The heat robs the beach of color until it seems, viewed through half-shut eyes, to be sketched out in black and white. The pose of a child at the end of a pile of broken cement blocks. The pelicans sailing as usual—dark on a glitter of sea.

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ORLANDO GARCIA says that most of the Cuban refugees are against the anti-hijack pact. They fear it will limit political asylum. The Cuban newspapers say that coexistence between Cuba and the U.S. has begun, and that the U.S. accepts the protectorate of Russia over Cuba.

We walk down Simonton Street and Garcia discusses the possibility of the U.S. also putting itself in danger by this compromise. What about the obvious need for international statutes against terrorism? True, Mr. Garcia admits, but also what about clandestine operations, what statutes will guard against those? He points out that in 1970 there had been the agitation about Soviet barges in Cuban ports (barges of a type linked to the deployment of nuclear submarines); and that in 1972 there had been reports of Soviet submarines in Cuban waters carrying missiles with a range of 650 miles.

Furthermore, not far from here, Lee Harvey Oswald, the assassin-to-be of JFK, busied himself in New Orleans with infiltrating the anti-Castro groups, with handing out pamphlets for the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, with getting his forged vaccination certificate ready in case of need. Close to here, too, hijacked planes set off for Cuba and young Americans set off on their trips to undergo revolutionary baptism. Key West is a natural place to wonder—at least fleetingly—about U.S. military security.

A LAST beer with Bernard the poet, whose beautiful eyes are less focused than usual, and who seems to be as anxious to return to the North as he had once been to get away. He mentions the Nixon-Castro pact and says that we should in any case stop "meddling" in the world. His slow drawling voice suggests that any sort of "activity" might be classed as "meddling." (America, like the "Father Figure"

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popularized by psychoanalysis, is always cast in the "active" role. That history displays cause and effect, that others might sometime "meddle with" America, seems outside the realm of such attitudes.)

*Tuesday, February 27*

In the street an old Cuban woman with a skirt and apron to her ankles stealthily approaches a wary white cat balancing on a fence. *"Ven linda, ven linda"* (come, beautiful one), she calls in a caressing voice. The cat arches its white back, is outlined against large shiny leaves, is posed in the pure light of early morning. For a moment the little town of Key West seems touchingly familiar and well known.

Further down the street a brief political discussion with Tom, at the place where his car is parked. News pictures of the POW's returning home from Vietnam rouse him to the thought that these same POW's are surely "not going to hassle about the Vietcong." He laughs joyously: "After they begin to talk to us, I think they're going to tell it like it is, they're going to say that they were really able to *get together* with the people." By "the people" does he mean the North Vietnamese who held them prisoner? Behind his long red youthful mustache he smiles knowingly: *"All* the people, the Vietcong and everyone, all the out-of-sight people all over the world!"

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As IF farewells are in themselves a negation of romanticism, disillusionment can follow the mere packing of a suitcase. . . . The figure draped in a green blanket, seen so often crouched by the fireplace at Captain Tony's, has suddenly come to life and is shamelessly panhandling on the main street. A reddish-faced stubby-haired head emerges from the blanket folds. Cold eyes stare at the passers-by. A strong, competent, and toneless voice demands: "D'you have a dollar to spare?" Only a little farther down a gangling teen-ager, wearing Western clothes, swings his feet in expensive hand-stitched leather boots, as he perches on a wall and asks with routine carelessness, "Can you spare a quarter?" The sunburned, long-haired beachcomber whose little girl has been allowed to visit him for a week is walking up and down Whitehead Street and trying with a surreptitious air to get rid of some marijuana. At the courthouse the pretty Jewish girl is arranging to telephone her parents in New York (her young man has been put in jail for being picked up with a "joint" in his pocket). Another boy from New Jersey (he looks about sixteen) joins us for a few moments and confesses, without apparent reason, that he had been able to "rip off" a case of coffee in Miami and sell it on the market. He says that now he will be able to get his motorcycle fixed.

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THEY tell me that the Copa de Oro vine which smothers the house of two young long-haired friends once arched across the street to cover the house opposite. It has been cut back (as have so many tendrils of romance and disorder in Key West) in spite of which the golden flowers are as big as small bowls and have the sheen of satin. The very young husband of the household, with a blond fearless face and wearing a hand-woven jacket from Peru, has a wife (clear eyes, a cloud of dark hair, and the poetic name of Alison) who was only seventeen and pregnant when this pair of babes-in-the-woods hitchhiked to Peru! Now—scornful of the American establishment and its achievements, resisting military service, slightly fierce when the U.S. is defended, but romantic and starry-eyed about the cultures upon which they have alighted like lovely Northern birds—this couple live in a salty Peruvian-textile-hung house of which they are as proud as any lovers of an earlier age. We eat a delicious lunch of vegetables (cooked by the young blond husband who has to get back to his work at a nearby motel). There seems no way to tell them that they are lucky!

DOWN to Mallory Square for the last time. I pass again—etched onto the plaque at the liquor store—the sensitive face of José Martí. One of the things about this revolutionary was his reaction to exile in the U.S., how he became sensitive to America during his long exile here, passing under the shadow of New York's Third Avenue El, talking in the boarding-houses thick with Cuban tobacco smoke, absorbing the poetry of Whitman, Emerson, Longfellow, applauding the vigor, the activity, the democratic tradition of this "gigantic nation" where "there doesn't seem to be enough soul." He developed a fascination with hotels as big as cities, elevators higher than church steeples, the masses swarming over their picnic baskets at Coney Island. "The surprising thing," he writes, "is the size, the quantity, the sudden outburst of human activity, that immense valve of pleasure open to an immense people . . . that mobility, that push . . . that dumbfounding . . . expansiveness, and that simplicity in the marvelous."

It is perhaps typical of the romantic and media-influenced quality of so much of the revolutionary propaganda which has enlivened the U.S. scene in the last decade, that José Martí's words have been cheapened among the rest. Luis Baralt (his biographer) observes that he himself has been worn to rags by those who capitalize upon Martí's fair criticism of his U.S. experiences,

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grinding them out to fill the pages of neo-Marxist publications. Take for instance his phrase, "I know the monster . . . I have lived inside him," a metaphor obviously used by Martí as Hobbes used the image of the Leviathan, but which a whole generation of young dissidents takes as the heart's cry of the Third World. Martí would certainly have been surprised to hear the ritualistic repetition of that one phrase of his—by agitators so far removed from his own intent, and drawing part of their inspiration from the new set of dictators controlling the Cuba he had wanted to set free.

IN KEY WEST watching the sun go down has become a ceremony. As the hour approaches, a procession starts from every corner of the town; a procession made up mostly of the young, of "long-hairs" and others, of tourists, of visiting and local oldsters. The procession streams through Mallory Square and ends up on the docks facing that slowly sinking globe, as if the viewers were Aztec worshipers fearful that the sun might never rise again. Sometimes someone plays a guitar; occasionally couples dance. Perhaps there is only a milling about, and what Tom calls "people getting together with people." Rather like a cocktail party without liquor.

On the outskirts of the crowd the two Garcia girls, with their tall brother Raymond hovering behind them, say—as if in apology—that they are on their way back home. They stand not far away from the place where the boat on which they escaped from Cuba was drawn up to add to the pile already there. These young Cubans form a counterpoint to the American young who crowd the docks (many wearing period costumes as if to say that they don't belong to the American "now," and that they have abandoned all possible careers and educational opportunities in order to "hang out," to take up borderline jobs, to live off the margin of affluence). In illustration of the eternal see-saw between romanticism and realism, the opportunities which the young Americans take for granted are those the young Cubans are so ready to seize. And it all seems to suggest that whatever the virtues of either school of thought, here at Land's End, part of a coast upon which so many waves of dissidents and libertarians have been thrown throughout the years, the old genius of renewal is taking place.

"It's going," someone cries pointing sunward; and a long-haired brown girl explains ardently to a doubting friend in a naval uniform who is already trying to hustle her off, "You should always watch it go *down,* you should have that moment!"

At this point at least the romantics win out, as everybody stares ecstatically at the sky, and the boy with the guitar strikes a few final notes.

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# The Question of the Judenräte

*Maurice Friedberg*

OF ALL the harrowing chapters of the Holocaust, that concerning the Nazi-imposed institutions of Jewish "self-government" in occupied Eastern Europe is probably the most painful and the most puzzling. Perhaps this explains in part the relative neglect of the subject in works dealing with the Nazi slaughter of European Jewry. For the doomed heroes of the Jewish resistance we may feel admiration or a proud sense of identification. But for the others, those who merely died, our feelings have come to be somewhat more equivocal. We express reverence, of course, but with the passage of time, as first-hand memories have begun to fade, and with the dimming of the ancient Jewish religious tradition of respect for those who choose to die in dignity, the number taking issue with the "passivity" of the victims seems to be on the increase.

This negative view is needless to say unencumbered by much knowledge of the period under discussion, recent though it was. How many of those who question the behavior of the masses of European Jewry are aware, for instance, of the fact, which even a casual examination of the chronology of the Hitler era demonstrates, that by the time the resistance movements in France, Poland, and elsewhere became active, the great bulk of the six million Jews of the ghettos had already been murdered? Indeed, the uprising in the ghetto of Warsaw thirty years ago was in fact Europe's *first* major act of anti-Nazi defiance. So it is perhaps fitting in a way that Isaiah Trunk's *Judenrat,* the first book-length study* of the least inspiring and in many ways the most frightening aspect of the Jewish tragedy of World War II, should have won a 1973 National Book Award for history at a time when those who still remember the tragedy—and they are not many, though it was only a generation ago—have been paying homage to the heroes of Warsaw.

In any discussion of the Holocaust period the issue of "collaboration" festers like a wound; in a discussion of the role of the local Jewish Councils under Nazi occupation it holds center stage. For many, the very idea that duly constituted Jewish bodies should have had any dealings with the Nazis whatsoever is shocking and abhorrent. Yet the brutal fact is that in this area, as in others, the Jews proved to be no more heroic, or craven, than anyone else. Every one of the occupied nations, bar none, produced some collaborators. The French had their Pétain and their Laval, the Norwegians had their Quisling, even the Russians had a turncoat Soviet general, Vlasov, whose troops aided the Nazis until the impending doom of the Third Reich became obvious to all. Those nations which produced no comparably notorious traitors were spared dishonor mainly because the Nazis had no interest in promoting such collaboration, and expressed no desire for it. This fact was freely admitted in the aftermath of the war in Poland, for example, as one explanation of why the country had never produced a pro-Nazi puppet government or otherwise deviated from its record of "valiant resistance."

SO FAR as the Jewish case is concerned here, Mr. Trunk makes an important distinction that should not again be overlooked in future studies of the Nazi era. Unlike the other comparable bodies in occupied Europe that were set up by the Nazis and backed by them, the Jewish Councils did not come about through Jewish initiative, let alone sympathy for the Nazi cause. The decision to create them —far from reflecting a sort of Jewish popular will—was an intrinsic part of Nazi strategy and came from the highest German circles, specifically by order of the Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich in a memorandum dated September 21, 1939, ordering all communities numbering ten thousand or more in German-occupied territory to elect representatives to deal with the German authorities. Even the small amount of self-determination implied by the term "election" was, moreover, merely a legalism. In a later memorandum dated October 12, 1939 from Hans Frank, governor of most of occupied Poland, and countersigned by Hitler himself, every local commissioner was specifically authorized "to change the composition [of the *Judenrat*] if he sees fit." The Councils, in other words, had far less leeway in their operations than has frequently been attributed to them.

Mr. Trunk is no less illuminating on the subject of the motivations of those who actually served on the Councils. Far from accepting such service with alacrity, there is ample evidence that many viewed their election not as a species of privilege but rather as an onerous burden which it was nonetheless their moral obligation to assume. This burden was assumed, moreover, in full consciousness not only of its ethical but even of its

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**Judenrat: The Jewish Councils in Eastern Europe under Nazi Occupation,* Macmillan, 664 pp., $14.95. The first historian to write about the *Judaenräte* was actually the late Philip Friedman, who died before completing his monograph on the subject. He did, however, leave behind a number of important articles and a great deal of meticulous research.



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theological implications. (Reading Mr. Trunk's book, we are faced over and over again with the realization that, from a Jewish standpoint at least, the ordinary habits of the rational mind are simply not sufficient to grasp the reality of the Hitler era; one must have recourse to religious concepts and eschatological categories—even as the European Jews did who were called upon to lead their fellow Jews during this period.) Mr. Trunk repeatedly demonstrates how the most secularized of Jews in Hitler's Europe sought guidance in the making of their agonizing decisions during this period from the ancient concepts of the Jewish religious tradition. He describes, for example, a meeting held in the Jewish community of Vilna to discuss the question of forming a *Judenrat,* where the single bond capable of uniting all the disparate and even antagonistic factions present was *Kiddush ha-Shem,* the rabbinic concept of martyrdom undertaken as a sanctification of the Name of God. Similarly, in a neighboring large city, a reluctant doctor was finally persuaded to accept the chairmanship of the *Judenrat* on the basis of the hallowed concept of *shaliach mitzvah* (messenger of the righteous deed), rich in associations in Jewish history.

Few members of the Jewish Councils could have been so unrealistic by this point as to believe that their service might actually—in the words of the Yom Kippur liturgy—"avert the evil decree"; yet many must have felt that by serving on such Councils they might at least help to blunt the edge of Jewish sufferings. And there was, at least on the face of it, some ground for such belief. Thus, Mr. Trunk draws the reader's attention to the network of Jewish communal bodies (*Kehillot*) which had been in more or less continuous existence in Poland for centuries only to be disbanded by German ordinance during the Occupation. Thus, the *Judenräte* could be viewed as filling a void brought about by the disappearance of the *Kehillot*; and their existence could even, in these terms, carry with it a certain measure of reassurance.

A no less important precedent for the role played by the Councils, one might add, was the Jewish tradition of *shtadlanut,* or intercession, whereby prominent Jews undertook the onerous and often dangerous task of negotiating on behalf of their kinsmen with hostile or indifferent authorities. Agreeing to serve on a *Judenrat* could easily be viewed in this context as a continuation of the efforts of a long line of Jewish notables, from the Middle Ages down to the 20th century, to plead the cause of beleaguered Jews. As Mr. Trunk writes:

> The entrance of the German army into any given locality spontaneously moved Jews traditionally active in the affairs of the community, to try to alleviate the tragic situation of oppressed Jews, engulfed in incessant abuses, forced labor under humiliating conditions, robberies and killings . . . those Jews who had taken it upon themselves to help their brethren in distress for the most part became the nuclei of the Councils.

By now we know, of course, that the Nazis were using the Councils for their own ends—as one more means of deluding their victims up to the last possible moment, and as a convenient scapegoat for the anger and despair of the ghetto population, since it was the Councils and not the Nazis themselves who were the instruments of enforcing the successively harsher anti-Jewish regulations.* So long as these regulations concerned issues like the daily food ration, or setting up machinery to extort money from the ghetto residents, one imagines that the Council members could still tell themselves that their stewardship was in some measure mitigating the chaos, that they were in fact helping their brethren. But by the time the *Judenräte* began to receive orders to deliver specific numbers of Jews for "resettlement," and it became common knowledge that the deportees were going to a certain death, the officials found themselves faced with a task unparalleled in even the darkest periods of Jewish history. In effect, as Jacob Robinson points out in his Introduction to Mr. Trunk's book, the Jewish Councils, charged with preparing the lists of deportees, were being asked to assume the powers of deciding, in the words again of the Yom Kippur liturgy, "who shall live and who shall die"—a prerogative that, to a believing Jew, is God's alone. In the face of such a decision, what were the members of the *Judenrat* to do?

There was the simple and terrible option of refusal—in accordance with the admonition of Maimonides laid down centuries before and cited by Mr. Robinson: ". . . if pagans should tell them [the Jews], 'Give us one of yours and we shall kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you,' they should all be killed and not a single Jewish soul should be delivered." The Councils did not heed this seemingly clear-cut admonition, and Jewish historians may forever be haunted by the question of whether they should have. Yet even the religious spokesmen in the various ghettos were not of a single mind on the issue. Some, contrary to the Maimonidean doctrine, argued that community leaders were enjoined by Jewish law to do everything in their power to rescue whatever part could be rescued.

In this view, which became the majority position of the *Judenrat* leaders, those who were already foredoomed in any case should be sacrificed for the sake of those who might still survive. Thus, the old, the infirm, and the children, who were the special targets of Nazi bestiality and who in any case would probably die of such "natural" causes as starvation and disease before very long, should take precedence in the deportation lists over the young and the healthy. The latter, it was believed, could possibly be saved if they were transformed into industrial workers, vital—indeed indis-

* As early as December 1940, that is, before mass deportations began, Adam Cziernakow, the head of the Warsaw *Judenrat,* noted in his diary that the Jews were being allotted half the bread ration issued to Gentile Poles, while "sugar, potatoes, flour, noodles, meat, marmalade, and coal were not given to the Jews at all." As time went on, starvation became common and outbreaks of cannibalism were reported: "three mothers ate parts of their babies who had died of hunger."

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pensable—to a wartime German economy suffering from an acute shortage of manpower.

It was this theory that was used to justify the many ruthless acts of such men as Mordecai Chaim Rumkowski, the notorious head of the *Judenrat* in the large ghetto of Lodz, of Jacob Gens, his counterpart in Vilna, and scores of others.* Indeed, Rumkowski was only one of many *Judenrat* officials so convinced of the efficacy, and perhaps even the morality, of their tactics, that they promised to stand trial voluntarily after Hitler was defeated and the war was over in the certain conviction that they would be not only exonerated but even hailed as saviors of their people.

To many ghetto inmates as well, the reasoning of *Judenrat* leaders made sense, not least because it offered a glimmer of "rational" hope in a situation of the blackest despair: some, perhaps even many, might yet survive; one need only find the means to be productive and thus win the privilege of being allowed to live. Yet even those psychologically vigorous enough to sustain such hopes could not but have been puzzled—and warned—by the tepidness of the Nazi response to their zeal. True, the German authorities accepted their labor, but they offered little in return by way of raw materials or tools, let alone food rations. The Jews—such is the nature of hope—attempted to provide their own. In Bialystok, for example, the rabbinate actually threatened with excommunication all persons who refused to give up their private sewing machines to the *Judenrat*-operated factory.

Such delusions could not last forever. Eventually, the true designs of the Nazis became evident: it was not productive Jews they wanted, but dead Jews. And there were to be no exceptions—even though this made no sense economically, even though the railroad cars delivering Jews to Auschwitz, Maidanek, and Treblinka could have been used instead for the far more productive purpose of transporting German troops and supplies. When the real intentions of the Nazis toward the Jews became clear, a number of *Judenrat* leaders, including Warsaw's Adam Czerniakow, committed suicide. Others, like Rumkowski, had long since been executed by the Nazis. Nine months after Czerniakow's suicide, the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto began. By then, however, Jewish lives were no longer at stake. Only Jewish honor could still be salvaged.

IF the Jewish Councils themselves had certain historical precedents, some of their departments—notably the ghetto police—did not. The police came into being as one of a number of separate "Jewish" municipal services—including fire brigades, sanitation departments, and even post offices—necessitated by the fact that every Jewish ghetto was hermetically sealed off from the rest of the city. Unlike other such services, however, the police became, for obvious reasons, a subject of painful inquiry in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Mr. Trunk offers no startling revelations here, beyond the reminder that the police, like the Councils, and like virtually all who were called upon to play any kind of active role in this period, were trapped from the beginning in a situation of moral blackmail from which there were virtually no means of extrication. Thus, while it is true that the police performed perhaps the most scurrilous task of all, being required physically to deliver Jews to the site of deportation, it is also true, as Mr. Trunk does not fail to note, that "every policeman in the Warsaw ghetto was threatened that he himself and his family would be 'resettled' if he did not deliver the prescribed quota of five 'head' per day."

Like the Councils themselves, the police force seems to have been recruited from two sources—those who felt it their *duty* to serve, thereby protecting the Jewish population from the probably worse fate of a police force made up of Nazi sympathizers from outside the ghetto—and those who did so in the hopes of thereby saving themselves and their immediate families. Again, as in the *Judenräte*, there were those among the Jewish police who were corrupt and cruel and overly eager to please their Nazi masters, but there were also those who were fair and compassionate, and who even went so far as to help the Jewish underground. And in the end, as Mr. Trunk reminds us, neither course of action availed against death: ". . . the policemen went the way of all Jews. At most they were given a 'privileged,' separate railroad car in the transport train."

ISAIAH TRUNK'S *Judenrat* contains a vast amount of factual information. Of footnotes alone, there are nearly two thousand. One senses in all this factuality a scrupulous effort by the author to avoid emotionalism in the interests of scholarship. Yet the effort is not altogether successful, perhaps because the events are still too much with us. A distance of thirty years is obviously not quite enough to achieve scholarly objectivity. The very form of the book itself attests to the problem. Like some obsessive eyewitness to a catastrophe, Mr. Trunk rehearses every detail, mentions every incident and person by name, only rarely stopping to offer general observations. This procedure imparts to the book the quality of a painting viewed from an excessively close range. The spectator sees countless individual brush-strokes and patches of color but the broad outlines of the canvas, the relation of one part to another, somehow escape him.

Perhaps proximity in time prevents all of us from beholding the Holocaust in all of its terror and woe. I suspect, however, that more than distance is demanded in this instance, and more even than the skills of a rational historian, however impressive they may be. The Holocaust has already produced a respectable body of scholarship, and for this we are grateful. But its Books of Job and Lamentations remain to be written.

*For an account of Rumkowski, see "Dictator of the Lodz Ghetto," by Solomon F. Bloom, COMMENTARY, February 1949; for Gens, see "Two 'Saviors' Who Failed," by Philip Friedman, COMMENTARY, December 1958.

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# Deep Tango

*William S. Pechter*

THE meaning of the sensation caused by *Last Tango in Paris*, of the febrile character of its reception quite apart from the character of the film itself, seems to me unmistakably clear: we want pornography. We want it, but we don't want to admit to wanting it, and so we want it cloaked in art, or some other socially respectable disguise; fun and "keeping up" will do, as witness the cultural legitimization of *Deep Throat*. Indeed, despite the enormous differences between the two films as individual works, their meaning as media events, the success of which can't be attributed to media hype alone, is, I think, conspicuously one not only in what we want of them but what we get: the common response to both films is some variety of disappointment. And this disappointment seems to me inevitable; we won't get what we want until we face up to what the thing we want is.

Take the simpler case of *Deep Throat*, in which the issues can be seen more clearly. Here is a film that in every essential respect is no different from the "pornos"* which first inundated us when the floodgates opened several years ago. To praise it for any "technical" advances—its home-movie level photography, a few *outré* camera angles, etc.—is either to be disingenuous in the manner of the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* trial, as a means to warding off censorship, or to patronize it as one might encourage a mental defective's first stumbling sounds with congratulations on fine speaking. True, unlike most of its predecessors, the film affects a lightly comic tone, but lines like, "Do you mind if I smoke while you eat?" (accompanying action self-explanatory) are about as good as it gets. And though there is a plot, I think even the film's partisans would be hard put to pretend this is any more than a pretext for (and means of padding out to feature length) the film's series of sexual encounters. Nor (despite what at least one critic seemed prepared to say in court about the film's enlightened proselytizing for alternatives to the "missionary" position) is its sexual activity itself in any way an "advance" on that between two consenting, heterosexual, human adults which could be seen in movie theaters at least three years ago (alternatives to the missionary position being dictated less by sensuous than by photogenic exigencies), nor could it be, human ingenuity in these matters being more limited than we like to think. (Indeed, this limitation may well be the main message that the pornos have for us.)

To be sure, *Deep Throat*'s star, Linda Lovelace, is a virtuoso performer of fellatio, yet she's this more by an anatomical stunt than by any inspired inventiveness (on the latter score, she runs, I think, a poor second to the nameless, unprepossessing girl who is used to tie together the episodes of *Teenage Fantasies*, the co-feature with *Deep Throat* when I happened to see it). And though it seems clear that Miss Lovelace does her own stunt work, what is a good deal less clear is whether she really enjoys it. For if Miss Lovelace's running nose and tearing eyes betray the sadistic male fantasy on which the movie rests, they betray simultaneously the fact that she is . . . acting. And it is this—the mere fact that she's acting (at least in the sense of pretending)—that distinguishes her from her anonymous colleagues in all the other pornos I have seen (though they, too, may be "acting," we cannot finally tell), and permits her to become the first acknowledged "star" of the new porno films: Camp heroine, *Esquire* cover girl (in polka-dotted, old-fashioned, girl-next-door get-up), and author of an autobiography (*Inside Linda Lovelace*, naturally).

Yet is acting, whether rudimentary or extraordinary, what we really want from porno movies? Do we really want to see their evolution into "art" films, as several of the reviewers of the subsequent film (*The Devil in Miss Jones*) by *Deep Throat*'s director so devoutly seem to wish? (The director, Gerard Damiano, has since announced his intention to forsake porno for conventional dramatic films.) I think not, and I think the proof of this lies in the fact that the one real "advance" made by the new porno films, and made early in their history, was in the moving on screeen of the act of ejaculation, the documentation of the fact that "acting" has not taken place. And, in this, one sees, I think, the line of development of porno films not from conventional dramatic film but from documentary, and, in particular, from that peculiarly prying, modern offshoot of documentary, "*cinéma-verité*," the persons in both stripped, physically or metaphorically, of their clothing. The erotic content of porno films is actually extremely variable, and their ability to sustain a purely erotic interest a good deal less durable than I'd originally conjectured when I wrote about the pleasurable experience of first seeing them several years ago. And yet, though I've seen few of them lately, I find they do sustain an

* I use the widespread colloquialism here not as any equivalent of either the pornographic or the erotic, though the pornos can be either, but only to refer neutrally to films in which explicit, unsimulated scenes of sexual activity are shown.



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interest, even a fascination, despite their frequent boredom: an interest not so much erotic as voyeuristic. Watching the passage of partners in a porno film has less in common really with reading *Fanny Hill* or *The Story of O* than with watching the Loud family on television, or a newsman thrusting a microphone into the face of the wife or mother of a disaster victim, or being a spectator in the trial of a criminal case. As with the Louds especially, we are held less by what actually happens than by what could happen, since, despite the tedium, the vehicle of these peculiar spectacles is a form, unlike an art form, in which, in theory anyway, anything might happen.

What we seek of these various and related spectacles is something we seem no longer to be able to get from art: the experience of authentic feeling. In an age when the emotions have become suspect, revealed by the psychiatric oracle to be either conscious or unconscious masks, the province in which such authenticity is even possible has shrunk drastically; no longer can we trust love and hate not to be lies, but only orgasm, and, since only the orgasm of the male can be made visible, ejaculation alone remains as proof that something has authentically been felt. Nor can one dismiss this feeling as inauthentic because of the fact of its being filmed; the presence of the cameras does make a difference, but one that is eventually assimilated even if into an altered situation. One recalls here Lenny Bruce's dissertation on the adaptability of male libido, with his illustration of the accident-victim sexually aroused by a nurse as an ambulance speeds him to the hospital. The pornos' sexual encounters may be made artificially slow in starting by the recording camera, but a real climax is eventually achieved.

In a sense, then, Vincent Canby is right when he complains of *Last Tango in Paris* that, in the simulation of its sex, it represents not the "breakthrough" it has been claimed to be, but merely an extension of the "prudery" with which sex has been depicted in conventional dramatic films; for all its art, *Last Tango in Paris* only butts its head against the barrier in a blind alley, while even a work as crude as *Deep Throat*, like all pornos, effortlessly achieves this breakthrough despite all such obstacles as plot, dialogue, and acting. (To my way of thinking, the most successful pornos are short, plotless, and silent, since even the most elemental verbal interjections—the "Please don't stop!" or "Oh, God, it's great!"—cast doubt on the emotional veracity of what one is witnessing.) Given the eschatological weight with which orgasm has been burdened in the porno films, it's no wonder that conventional dramatic films have attempted to compete by their ever-increasing preoccupation with the mechanics of that other ultimate human experience that the pornos cannot parade numberlessly before us: death. And so it is that two totemic images of the contemporary cinema are those twin orifices of birth and death: the vagina and the bullet hole.

And yet it must be said for *Last Tango in Paris*, which itself makes no claims of breakthrough and seems almost deliberately to be the end of something old rather than any beginning, that what Canby asks of it is, at least by implication, silly. Of course, Brando and Maria Schneider are simulating their sexual activity, are acting; would one complain of Brando's death scene that he isn't really dying? The real question is whether the film required that the scenes of sex be so explicitly simulated, and I believe it did. For what the film is about is the attempt of the character, Paul, played by Brando, to pornographize his relationship with Jeanne, played by Miss Schneider, to obliterate his own and her self by the submission to a relationship given over totally to sex; and we need to know precisely of what this attempt consists. Paul's need in this is to escape from the doubt and pain caused by his wife's suicide (which has taken place before the action of the film begins), and, ultimately, his attempt is abandoned: he can expunge their names, and biographies, but finally not their selves from the relationship, no matter how rigorously he delimits its boundaries; in the end, he declares the ground rules void, and tells Jeanne that he loves and wants to marry her. But, prepared as she seemed to accompany him in his pursuit of sexual oblivion, she rejects his conventional proposal, returning instead to her colorless fiancé, a *cinéma-verité* film-maker.

Despite the murkiness of some of its details, and the claims and counter-claims in which the film must now struggle to maintain its identity, the main drift of *Last Tango in Paris* seems to me transparently clear. For all the explicit representation of sexual activity in the film, I think it is almost pointedly non-erotic; the sex, at least for Paul, is too desperately death-driven, too patently a surrogate for suicide; there is none of that expansive, self-sufficient sense of the sensuous presence of flesh and of the intoxicating welling up of desire in which the power of a truly erotic work like *Walkabout* resides (though *Walkabout* is a work in which no explicit sexual activity takes place, and has been dismissed by several critics as a film for children). The vision in *Last Tango* of Paul's purposeful submission to the rule of sex is yet another instance of sex made into ideology, of sex in the head; it is precisely the fact that sex is used by Paul as a substitute for and escape from something else that drives the eroticism out of the film.

But if the erotic impulse, which is life-enhancing, has been extinguished in *Last Tango*, the pornographic impulse is seen pervasively to spring to life. For what is the pornographic if not the obliteration of the self, the conversion of persons into objects for use? For Paul, the quest to convert himself and his partner into nothing more than their sex organs fails; despite himself, banished emotions assert themselves: he wants to know her name. But what of Jeanne, who seems, in a curious way, to thrive under the conditions Paul has imposed on her? She does thrive, but it would be wrong, I think, to claim she grows; in the end, obses-

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sively intoning "I don't know who he is . . . I don't know his name" (after having killed Paul to rid herself of him), she seems in her own way as profoundly alienated as he did at the beginning. It's true that the "freedom" through submission to sex by which Paul has held her in thrall ("I want you free," he tells her; "Free, I'm not free," she replies) is despotic and childish; "I feel like a child again here," she says at one point of their relationship, in which the sexual activity itself becomes regressively anal and masturbatory, and, when Paul dies (shot by her as she speaks her name), he curls up in a fetal position. But if Paul, having declared his love for her and attempting to lead her, however parodistically, through the romantic "rite" of their tango, is seen to be no longer the masterful mentor but merely another gum-chewing, overaged adolescent American, his craziness only the antics of a college boy on a fling in Paris (and revealed to be sterile to boot, though ironically he dies exclaiming, "Our children will remember"), what is that adulthood her fiancé invokes for which she rejects Paul? In the end, she returns to a man for whom she is of interest only as she can be used to make "cinema," and who, all along, treats her as only an object to be choreographed for the camera; a man who tells her, "I wanted to film you all the time. I wanted to film you in the morning when you wake up. I wanted to film you when you fall asleep," the camera having become, for him, the instrument of physical intimacy; and a man whom she earlier accuses of "raping her mind."

PERHAPS this account of *Last Tango in Paris* that I'm trying to give isn't the media's; perhaps it's no longer possible to extricate the film itself from under the avalanche of hyperbole of all kinds by which it has been buried. The film I'm describing is not perhaps a work comparable in its impact on its medium to *The Rite of Spring*; if there were such a work, it would be *Breathless,* which characteristically was greeted by the media with indifference and incomprehension, though the influence of Godard on Bertolucci, so overwhelming in Bertolucci's earlier film, *Partner,* can still be seen in *Last Tango* in such things as the stop-start music and the fracturing of its narrative. Rather, *Last Tango in Paris* seems to me clearly to evolve from Bertolucci's earlier *The Conformist* in both its flaws and virtues, from the burnished glow of its color (it would be interesting to see the work of Vittorio Storaro, who photographed both films, for a different director) to its too neat ironies (the apartment in which Paul and Jeanne conduct their exploratory relationship is on the Rue Jules Verne, and, at the end, the film resolves itself by becoming, rather like *Blow-Up,* a perfect murder mystery). Like *The Conformist, Last Tango in Paris* seems at once theatrically complex—magnificent in its array of expressive means—and dramatically simplistic—as patly contrived as *The Conformist*'s psychologizing of its protagonist's fascism as the result of his fear of his latent homosexuality.

But where Bertolucci's film seems shallow, full of those grand romantic gestures that have seemed faintly spurious in his work since *Before the Revolution,* there Brando's film takes over, and, between them, they have created a film good enough to make us reflect both on the meaning of Paul's and Jeanne's relationship, and on our own sensation-hungry relation to it. And though it's true that Brando is only "acting," perhaps the "breakthrough" implied in Canby's strictures on the film may be closer at hand than we think; after all, the film which started the ball rolling, so to speak, for the pornos, *I Am Curious (Yellow),* was a serious, "art" film, if one with unknown, foreign actors. Have we now, with *Last Tango in Paris,* perhaps reached a point comparable to that of *I Am Curious* with respect to the demands we will place on every actor, no matter how famous or great, for unsimulated authenticity of feeling? If so, the ascendancy of true pornography may well be at hand; and I don't refer exclusively to the depiction of sexual activity, which, like every other subject matter, can be treated pornographically or not. Having finally demanded of films —always, by their nature, potentially pornographic, because always, in their allowing us to see and not be seen, potentially voyeuristic—that they be not art but life, spectacles of "real" emotions in which we aren't implicated, we will have successfully dissociated ourselves from feeling and rendered not only the performers in these spectacles but ourselves into pornographic objects. Perhaps that prospect isn't so unpleasant; probably, it is less unpleasant than to be human. Only let us hope that when we deliver ourselves over to the pornographic—to the realm of the user and the used—we do so with our eyes as wide open and with as much knowledge of what we want as does Jeanne.

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## Stalinophilia

THE FELLOW TRAVELLERS. By DAVID CAUTE. *Macmillan. 433 pp. $8.95.*

*Reviewed by* STEVEN KELMAN

THE 20th century has had its share of atrocities, but certainly Hitlerism and Stalinism deserve to be placed in a category all their own. These were systems of rule unprecedented in world history for brutality and depravity practiced on a mass scale. Under both, millions of citizens were murdered by their own government. Under both, the modern concepts of popular participation and democracy were grotesquely deformed; and under both, intellectuals were stifled and martyred in a fashion unknown in the autocracies of old.

There is, however, a pertinent difference between the horrors of Hitlerism and Stalinism. Western intellectuals, by and large, recognized Hitlerism for what it was, and acted accordingly. Stalinism, by and large, they praised, often effusively. David Caute's *The Fellow Travellers* is a discussion of this shameful betrayal of moral values and common decency. Its topic is an important one, because just as the health of German society after the war required a coming to terms with Nazism and its origins, so does the health of our own intellectual community require a coming to terms with Stalinophilia and its origins.

They were a large and distinguished group, the fellow travellers: Theodore Dreiser, Dorothy Parker, Nathanael West, Romain Rolland, Jean-Paul Sartre, George Bernard Shaw, Julian Huxley, Harold Laski, Beatrice and Sidney Webb, and many more. Distinguished and respected as they were, however, they also revealed themselves to be collaborators with barbarism. All that Beatrice and Sidney Webb could bring themselves to say about the famine which swept the Soviet Union in conjunction with forced collectivization and the liquidation of the kulaks was, "There are ends more important than additional food supplies for immediate consumption." Harold Laski, writing in 1934, in the exact interval between famines which had killed millions and purges which were to kill hundreds of thousands more, suggested that "There has been more realization of personality under the Soviet regime than any comparable epoch in history." In the Soviet Union he had found "a buoyant and optimistic faith I have never before encountered."

These were people who supported Stalin's purge trials. Theodore Dreiser wrote that Trotsky was guilty of all charges against him; a reporter for the *Nation* informed his readers that it was the Russian masses who had instituted the purges in order to be rid of unpopular leaders. In 1938 some 150 American intellectuals signed a statement described by Caute as "linking support for the Moscow verdicts with the cause of progressive democracy in the United States."

In the early postwar years fellow travellers saw it as one of their main publicistic duties to counteract the flood of evidence concerning slave labor in the Soviet Union: at the 1949 libel trial instigated by the Soviet defector Kravchenko *(I Chose Freedom)*, German Communists who had been sent to Soviet concentration camps and had testified that such camps did indeed exist were denounced for "playing the Nazi game." In 1947 the "Red Dean" of Canterbury, Hewlett Johnson, branded as a lie the claim that after the Nazi-Soviet pact Stalin had handed over to Hitler a number of anti-fascist refugees living in the Soviet Union—and he refused to change his view even when some victims of Stalin's action appeared before him.

Stalin himself appeared to the fellow travellers as the very essence of a practical visionary, a man who had eschewed the wild-eyed revolutionism of Trotsky in favor of the brass tacks of "building socialism." After a 1945 interview with Stalin, the Dean of Canterbury reported that the old man was "calm, composed, simple. Not lacking in humor. Direct in speech, untouched by the slightest suspicion of pomposity. There was nothing cruel or dramatic . . . about Stalin's face. Just steady purpose and a kindly geniality." A few years earlier, Walter Duranty, the New York *Times* correspondent whose reports from the purge trials displayed a level of skepticism about equal to that of *Pravda,* had explained, "I backed Stalin the way you back a horse."

DOES the era of fellow-travelling belong safely to the past? The jacket describes Caute's book as giving a "portrait of those who belonged squarely to the Old Left" —and there are those who believe that the Old Left has no relevance to our time. Indeed, attempts have been made to equate the fellow travellers with those who, balancing East against West, chose in the 1950's and later to identify themselves with the Western as against the Communist world. (A certain Philip Rosenberg, reviewing *The Fellow Travellers* in the New York *Times Book Review,* went so far as to call such people "fellow travellers of capitalism," and in fact found them morally far more culpable than Stalinist fellow travellers.) Caute himself, who appears to be that rarest of creatures, a genuine "third camper," makes a few remarks in his book which might encourage such a view, but is honest enough to reject the comparison as idiotic, resting as it

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does on an analogy between the evils of American society and those of Stalinist Russia:

> What occurred in America [during the McCarthy era] was in no way comparable to the Soviet experience under Stalin. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed, but Stalin's policies may have accounted for twenty million deaths. Not all the victims of the witch-hunts got a fair trial, but at least they got one. It took a grand jury investigation and two jury trials to send Alger Hiss to jail for five years. He came out after four. The attentions of the FBI may have been exceedingly unpleasant, but J. Edgar Hoover's displeasure had less fatal consequences than Yezhov's or Beria's. In the United States there were no forced-labor camps for political prisoners, no queues outside the Attorney General's office waiting for death certificates.

The psychology and methodology of fellow-travelling are far from being matters of historical interest alone. Indeed, the main value of Caute's account may lie in the insights it provides into today's travellers to Cuba, China, and North Vietnam, who return weaving tales of progress and happiness that might have been lifted directly from accounts of Stalin's Russia.* We see in these accounts the same suspension of disbelief, the same abandonment of critical reason, the same adherence to a double standard. Caute narrates how Willi Munzenberg—the colorful creator of an infinite number of front organizations during the 30's who later criticized Stalin over the Nazi-Soviet pact and was killed, probably by Stalinist agents, in 1940—obtained the signatures of countless intellectuals to a petition denouncing the Chiang Kai-shek government for arresting two "Swiss pacifists" in Shanghai. As a result of this pressure the pair were released, whereupon they turned out to be a Ukrainian Communist and his wife working as Soviet spies in China. The story is painfully familiar.

The incredible self-deception involved in the "on-the-spot" reports of the fellow travellers remains perhaps their most striking characteristic. What foreign reporter, never having been to America and knowing little about the country, would think of arriving in Washington, putting himself into the hands of the State Department for a guided tour and selected interviews, and then go back to write a story on the basis of that alone? Yet this is considered to be standard practice in a country like North Vietnam or Cuba.† Nietzsche captured this mentality: "The most common lie is that which one lies to oneself; lying to others is relatively an exception . . . this wishing not to see what one does see, this wishing not to see as one sees . . . the pathological condition of this perspective turns the convinced into fanatics."

How could so many intellectuals, with all their learning, their pride in probing and exposing and deflating, their impatience with evil, their sympathy for the oppressed, embrace terror, degradation, and mass murder? Honest people must confront this question, and attempt an answer. Caute's is direct and convincing: elitism. The fellow travellers did not, by and large, come out of the Marxist tradition, but out of the tradition of the Enlightenment, and in the worship of Stalin their rationalist faith was merely carried to its ultimate—irrational—extreme. Many of the fellow travellers, using the phrase before a negative connotation became attached to it, proudly called themselves social engineers. They saw the Good Society arising, not as the approximated result of the struggles of ordinary people to achieve what they themselves defined as a better life, but from the planning of the Wise and the Just. When Stalin crushed the fragile remnant of independent labor unionism in the Soviet Union, the Webbs—who in real life were historians of British trade unionism and Fabian gradualists *par excellence*—wrote that worker demands had been sabotaging hopes for economic expansion. "It was not for such an anarchic scramble after wages that Lenin had restored trade-union independence," they wrote. As for workers' control, they asked how single factories could be expected to recognize the "true needs" of the community or the requirements of production. Upon visiting a Soviet factory during his tour and seeing some workers arguing with one another, George Bernard Shaw remarked to his companion, Lady Astor, "The more I see of the proletarians the more I thank God I am not one."

THE elitist intellectuals saw themselves as society's ideal rulers. And they perceived—misperceived, as it turned out—the Soviet Union as a place where people like themselves held power. George Bernard Shaw was perhaps the archetypical representative of the social engineer as fellow traveller. While others persisted in presenting the Soviet government as some "higher form" of democracy, Shaw openly and happily admitted it was a dictatorship. "So many of us," wrote a contemporary, "call ourselves democrats when all we are really doing is sitting on a fence built entirely of words. Bernard Shaw with his hatred of folly and inefficiency has quite definitely got off the fence into the garden of dictatorship." As early as 1921, Caute points out, Shaw "defined the Soviet system as an oligarchy founded on the will of an energetic minority." What made him happy was that the minority was *his* minority. "He agreed with

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* See, in this connection, Sheila K. Johnson's "To China, With Love," COMMENTARY, June 1973.

† Philip Rosenberg argues that, after all, the fellow travellers *didn't know* what was really going on in Russia, and neither did anybody else. Partly this is simply untrue; partly it begs the question. Publications like the *New Leader* wrote the truth about Stalinism throughout the 30's, gaining for themselves the eternal enmity of the fellow travellers and their successors. Just as important, people who were constantly visiting and reporting from the Soviet Union had an obligation to find out the facts about what was going on there. If American journalists in Vietnam had never investigated My Lai or other examples of civilian suffering, preferring instead to take Saigon government handouts as their sources, how would we react to the explanation for their behavior that "nobody knew" about the atrocities?

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Wells that the world was divided into commanders, obeyers, and thinkers. But in Russia the thinkers were now the commanders."

Now, elitism is a malady which affects all elite groups in society —Wasp patricians and corporate executives no less than intellectuals. Moreover, opposition to elitism need not be confused with the sort of spurious populism which simply accepts as good and correct whatever opinion the majority of the people hold at a given time. There is certainly nothing wrong with an intellectual, or anyone else, holding out for and seeking the adoption of his ideas, even when most people scorn them. There are even reasonably persuasive arguments that the "public interest" may consist of something different from the sum total of private interests. Dangerous, however, are those who insist there is *no* relation between public opinion and public interest. Although majority vote does not necessarily produce the "public interest," no superior alternative procedure exists—especially when majority vote is tempered with the kind of group bargaining that protects minority interests.

But the democratic system unfortunately holds little inspiration for intellectual elitists, who have a tendency to be drawn instead to dictatorial alternatives featuring themselves or their likes in the ruling position. Edmund Wilson summarized the ideology of the fellow travellers—and of all their many successors—when he wrote in 1932 of his admiration for the Russian Communist leaders "because they are men of superior brains who have triumphed over the ignorance, the stupidity, and the short-sighted selfishness of the mass." The radical large-scale attempt to change human beings from the way they are to the way elitists think they should be requires a special kind of social and political system; it is not just coincidence that the regimes which the fellow travellers saw as realizing their cherished ideals turned out to be societies of oppression and terror.

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## "Relevant" Prayer

A CONTEMPORARY HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICE. Edited by SIDNEY GREENBERG and S. ALLAN SUGARMAN. *Prayer Book Press. 187 pp. $6.95.*

MAHZOR FOR ROSH HASHANAH AND YOM KIPPUR. Edited by JULES HARLOW. *The Rabbinical Assembly of America. 790 pp. $9.00.*

*Reviewed by* EDWARD GRAHAM

RABBI Sidney Greenberg and S. Allan Sugarman have surely found a need, but they have not filled it. They have determined that many young people wish to participate in Jewish worship—at least on the High Holidays—but that these young people cannot "relate" to the "traditional" services of the Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox persuasions. The prayer book that proceeds from this assessment of a very real problem rests, however, at the same time on a number of assumptions that are wholly unjustifiable. One is that a religious service ought to be a sort of "happening," only more so; another is that the interest some young Jews have in certain ideas and activities serves to qualify or even to sanctify those ideas and activities as liturgy; still another is that traditional Hebrew prayers should be *made* to say (at least in English!) what some young people might like to have had them say.

Thus, since many young people seem to enjoy singing and listening to rock and folk music; since they seem to "identify" with anti-administration sentiments and pro-ecology ones; and since they like to see themselves as universalists rather than as particularists, the editors have raked together a collection of songs, photographs, line drawings, liberal political statements, and other benevolent pronouncements and put them between loose-leaf covers. And yet it seems that Messrs. Greenberg and Sugarman intend the users of their book to pray, for along with this material they have retained the general structure and a great deal of the text of the traditional High Holiday liturgy. The result, as in so many newly-written liturgies, is a repeatedly jarring clash between the contemporary elements and the mood and pattern of thought of the traditional service; in this clash any possible or imagined aesthetic, intellectual, or spiritual unity simply vanishes.

CONSIDER two examples. The cantor's personal prayer (*Hin'ni He'oni Mima'as*), urging God's acceptance of his petition in the congregation's behalf despite his own admitted sins and failures, becomes here a proof text for the Beatles' "He's a Real Nowhere Man." Again, the Hebrew text of the Torah portion (Leviticus 16) for Yom Kippur, which deals with the choosing of a goat to be sent to Azazel as an atonement for the sins of Israel, is accompanied by a set of four illustrations, showing first what appears to be a group of black and white Freedom Marchers on a country highway; next, a woman with a hand-lettered sign, "God Bless Our President," affixed to a large pocketbook from which are projecting two small American flags; then, a caricature of George Wallace, arms crossed and head facing determinedly to the rear; and finally, a larger gathering of (young?) people with their hands raised in the familiar "V" sign.

The montage and the Beatles song, two of countless similar examples, give an idea of the underlying conception of this prayer book. Whenever the suspicion enters the editors' minds that a traditional prayer or Torah reading is saying something young people may not be interested in or might not like, they simply introduce some "relevant and meaningful" material or—worse—deliberately mistranslate or altogether fail to translate the Hebrew text in question. Perhaps the prime casualty of this practice is that jewel of the liturgy, the *Kaddish*, a series of praises to God's greatness, goodness, and exaltedness, which appears a number of times in various forms throughout the service—all untranslated. The loose paraphrase of *Eil Adon*, on the other hand, works well enough, but the editors choose deliberately to ignore the last line with its specific reference to the supernatural *seraphim* and *ophanim*. The *Avot* prayer, which recurs often in the service, is translated only once, and the statement in it that God revives the dead is fudged in favor of a more "digestible" idea (i.e., one whose meaning is obscure enough to pass): "You lovingly remember all Your creatures to life." And the *Alenu*, a text emphasizing the differences between the Jewish people and other peoples, and underscoring the unique Jewish destiny, is not translated at all.

The pattern is clear: whatever in the prayers is particularistic, whatever mentions such ancient rituals as animal sacrifice, whatever emphasizes supernaturalism or God's holiness, whatever dwells elaborately on God or His acts as they affect our daily lives, is softpedaled, mistranslated, or omitted entirely. The specific theological or sociological stance adopted by Rabbi Greenberg and Mr. Sugarman is not at issue here. But if they doubt or reject the idea of Israel's uniqueness or of God's omnipotence, simple honesty should have required them to change the *Hebrew* text of the prayers to make it accord with the theology and sociology they espouse. As matters stand, Greenberg and Sugarman want both to retain the traditional prayers (perhaps fearing to be thought Reformers) and to have them mean something other than what they *do* mean. One wonders how the high-minded young people for whom this prayer book has been created would greet the news that they are getting something less than the truth from those who purport to be especially sensitive to their interests and aroused consciences.

THE Greenberg-Sugarman prayer book fails to answer the question that is its very reason for being—the question, indeed, that hovers over all the "new" liturgies being produced in our time. Just how does one, or can one, go about creating a "relevant and meaningful" new prayer book without destroying the sense of eternity and awe

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so necessary for prayer, and without turning religious services into socio-political forums or encounter groups? The Rabbinical Assembly's new *Mahzor* for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, edited by Rabbi Jules Harlow, succeeds—in the main—by evading the question. On the whole a first-rate contribution to Jewish liturgical art, the *Mahzor* offers fresh and thoughtful translations and, in a fine innovation, provides alternate services for the variety of congregations within the Conservative movement. The extensive commentaries and readings are always interesting and informative; directions to the worshiper are helpful—as are the transliterations of those portions of the Hebrew text likely to be sung by the congregation. The book is beautifully printed (the Hebrew fonts are especially attractive) on fine paper and is attractively bound.

But the question of "relevance" continues to rankle, for it is the prime source of such significant defects as this prayer book does have. Even among those who are disposed to pray with some degree of regularity, there has been a growing insistence that some account be taken of matters that our forefathers' prayers could not possibly have comprehended. The Greenberg-Sugarman overkill approach yields something, but it is something other than prayer. Rabbi Harlow's efforts at introducing "relevance," although much more temperate, are by and large not any more successful. An example is his rendering of the acrostic poem *V'khol Ma'aminim* that appears in the Rosh Hashanah service. In its traditional form, this is a collection of verses cataloguing certain of God's attributes or characteristic actions; each couplet concludes with a refrain proclaiming what "all Jews believe" about the action or attribute described. Rabbi Harlow allows the traditional Hebrew order to stand, but his translation—perhaps for rhetorical reasons—in part reverses that order. Thus a typical couplet as translated in the High Holiday prayer book (edited by Rabbi Morris Silverman) currently in use in most Conservative synagogues might be:

> He redeemeth from death and delivereth from the grave;
> And all believe that He is the mighty Redeemer.

Here is Rabbi Harlow's translation of the same lines:

> We believe that he redeems life from the grave.
> *Therefore we shall not fear death.*

The newer version demonstrates a movement away from the straightforward pronouncement of belief which is the fundamental thrust of the Hebrew text, in favor of a statement describing how men will behave or react pursuant to God's action. The whole tenor of the prayer becomes more "humanistic" as a result of this more or less consistently followed pattern of change. Further on in the same prayer, Rabbi Harlow entirely abandons the Hebrew of the refrain portion of each couplet in order to introduce some real "relevance":

> We believe that He remembers our frailty.
> *Therefore perfection is not His demand.*
> We believe that He is in no way limited.
> *Therefore our noblest dreams are not absurd.*
> We believe that He abides in mystery.
> *Therefore we need not solve life's every problem.*
> We believe that He is eternal King.
> *Therefore earthly rulers deserve no ultimate allegiance.*

Faustian strivings and Freudian fumblings! Even putting aside the dubious value of such pronouncements, as well as the semi-sequiturs that some of them embody, it is plain that the mere intrusion of ideas so obviously foreign to the prayer—even as it is so drastically reorchestrated by Rabbi Harlow—is jarring and cacophonous.

In the martyrology section beginning *Eileh Ezkerah* ("These I Will Remember"), Rabbi Harlow includes some relatively modern selections from the poetry of Chaim Nachman Bialik, Nelly Sachs, A. M. Klein, and others. These are immensely powerful and entirely in keeping with the tone of an-

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guished outrage characteristic of the section as a whole. Not content, however, with the charged atmosphere engendered by these selections, Rabbi Harlow goes on to disfigure the *Kaddish* by forcing into alternate lines of the text such place names as Auschwitz, Masada, and Babi Yar. Equally unsuccessful, though for a different reason, are the clumsy and ill-constructed rhymed versions of such familiar Hebrew metrical pieces as *Shahar Avakeshkha* and *Adon Olam*. Here are some lines from *Adon Olam*:

> The Lord eternal reigned before the birth of every living thing.
> When all was made, as He ordained, then only was He known as King.
> When all is ended He alone will reign in awesome majesty.
> He was, He is, and will be glorious in eternity.
> Peerless and unique is He, with none at all to be compared.
> Beginningless and endless, His vast dominion is not shared.

One questions the need to provide a rhymed English version of *Adon Olam* at all. Surely no Conservative congregation would sing it or (Heaven forfend) recite it in English. Rabbi Harlow does much better in his treatment of *Yigdal*, which receives a simple but quite adequate and accurate English paraphrase as well as a transliterated version for those requiring one.

Rabbi Harlow's decision to replace the Jacobean English of earlier prayer books with something approaching modern English usage (changing the form of direct address to God from Thou to You, among other things) will undoubtedly cause a gnashing of teeth in certain quarters, though clearly this is the wave of the future in translations of *all* liturgies and biblical texts. One of Rabbi Harlow's reasons for changing to modern English was surely to make his translations clear and accurate, but his desire for clarity leads him on occasion to write awkward or even incorrect English sentences, while the wish to make a faithful rendering of the Hebrew text sometimes conflicts with the need to uphold certain theological or sociological views currently in favor within Conservative Judaism. Thus in the *Kiddush*, we find a Hebrew passage stating that God chose Israel from among all peoples, exalted it above all tongues, and sanctified it with His commandments. Rabbi Harlow can bring himself to say no more than that the King of the universe has "chosen and distinguished us by sanctifying our lives with His commandments." And in the *Avot* prayer Rabbi Harlow has theological difficulties equal to those of Greenberg and Sugarman. His translation, "Praised are You, Lord, Master of life and death," clearly evades the Hebrew's direct statement that God revives the dead.

A prayer book is not the place surreptitiously to "resolve" complicated and long-standing doctrinal or rhetorical difficulties, and the word-mongering required of an editor who feels compelled to make the attempt inevitably takes its toll in linguistic awkwardness and even outright distortions of meaning. Nevertheless, and taken all together, the shortcomings in Rabbi Harlow's *Mahzor* constitute a relatively small blemish on what remains a first-rate and timely new prayer book for the Conservative movement—one, moreover, with lessons to offer to traditionalists and "with-it" reformers alike.

## Her Story

LOOKING BACK: A CHRONICLE OF GROWING UP OLD IN THE SIXTIES. By JOYCE MAYNARD. *Doubleday. 160 pp. $5.95.*

*Reviewed by* JANE LARKIN CRAIN

AT NINETEEN, Joyce Maynard has achieved a not wholly undeserved publicity. She had placed short stories with various national magazines while still in high school, and at eighteen, as a freshman at Yale University, wrote a cover story for the New York *Times Magazine*, "An Eighteen-Year-Old Looks Back On Life." Her recent appearance on the *Today* show to promote *Looking Back*, her first full-length work, establishes her, at least for the time being, as someone well on her way to being acknowledged as an "authority" in her particular field of expertise, which is, essentially, herself—and, by extension, her "generation."

*Looking Back* is an often lively and articulate survey of its author's young life, most of which has been spent with her family in what she describes as a delightful small town in New Hampshire. Her education so far has included a senior year at Phillips Exeter Academy and the beginnings of a college career at Yale. The book is a conglomeration of anecdote and reflection, touching among other things on the frustrations of her audio/visual-aids-ridden schooling, the agonies of her adolescent ungainliness, and countless hours spent with the television, being barraged by an assortment of commercials, apocalyptic news reports, situation comedies, and the gruesome depictions of medical dramas.

Miss Maynard speculates on matters ranging from the significance of the Beatles to the ultimate nature of death, attempting to extrapolate from her own experience what she regards as the sociological realities of the 1960's, especially the tendencies and predicaments of her peers. She styles her generation as one of "unfulfilled expectations." While nowhere does she give anything resembling adequate substantiation of this pronouncement, she does nonetheless strive valiantly to avoid the sorts of facile generalizations she sees abounding on so many of the subjects she considers.

*Looking Back* is for the most part a diverting work, but any attempt to judge it must bend to the fact that it is the fledgling author's promise and not really her book that engages us. In all fairness, it should be said that it could very easily have been much worse than it is. Miss Maynard is quick to point out that she is not attempting a Representative Life, and she consciously eschews some of the more maddening postures of self-righteousness and self-pity for which her "generation" has by now become notorious. She admits to never having felt especially

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JANE LARKIN CRAIN, *a new contributor, is a young critic and free-lance writer living in New York.*

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beleaguered by doomsday thoughts of the Bomb, the War, and Social Turmoil, and she chastises her college acquaintances for their mindless championship of "liberation," their sacralization of marijuana, and their vaunted allegiance to the narrow-minded and defensive little enclaves of the "counter-culture."

Unfortunately, the clarity of judgment Miss Maynard achieves in those matters where her indignation and hence her wit are clearly aroused is all but overwhelmed by the atmosphere of uncertainty that pervades *Looking Back*. She communicates a sense of helplessness in the face of her own life, a suspicion that questions worth asking will inevitably prove unanswerable, and an apologetic eagerness to qualify and even to discredit her own moral and intellectual standards. The book begins with a statement to the effect that her life "means less" than a five-year-old's because she has "lived more of it already." This view of experience as a process of depletion and obscuration grows into the most dominant conviction in the book, and it beclouds even the many passages of basic intelligence and artistry.

Miss Maynard herself provides some clues to the source of that mental paralysis in the face of complexity which manifests itself in her case as anxious skepticism and in others of her peers as anything from hippiedom to revolutionism. She describes the world in which she has done her "growing up" to date as one in which adults seem to have thrown up their hands and turned to children for guidance. This abdication is not one that children should be expected to accommodate, and its consequences are proving disastrous. It is clear that someone who has not been taught to deal rationally with any sort of difficulty at all is likely to find life a very threatening business indeed, defending himself against it in responses that range between the extremes of enervation and violence.

Hence, possibly, Miss Maynard's world-weary—and thoroughly unconvincing—decision to muddle through the rest of her days as best she can, tending her own garden. To her credit, and on the basis of the unselfconscious, and finest, moments in *Looking Back*, she is not really at home playing the disenchanted spectator, a role she seems rather to adopt in deference to contemporary canons of sophistication. Miss Maynard is obviously much younger than she knows, and it is easy to find oneself responding to her book with the blend of enthusiasm, exasperation, and condescension reserved for especially bright, dedicated, and outrageous students. She gives such a strong impression of being poised on the verge of doing something truly important that it is impossible to resist the impulse to give her a shove in the right direction.

Wisdom, as Miss Maynard is quick to announce, is not the inevitable compensation of age. In her case, particularly if she puts her not inconsiderable talent to work on something other than periodic bulletins on the state of her own development, it might be.

## Apparatchik

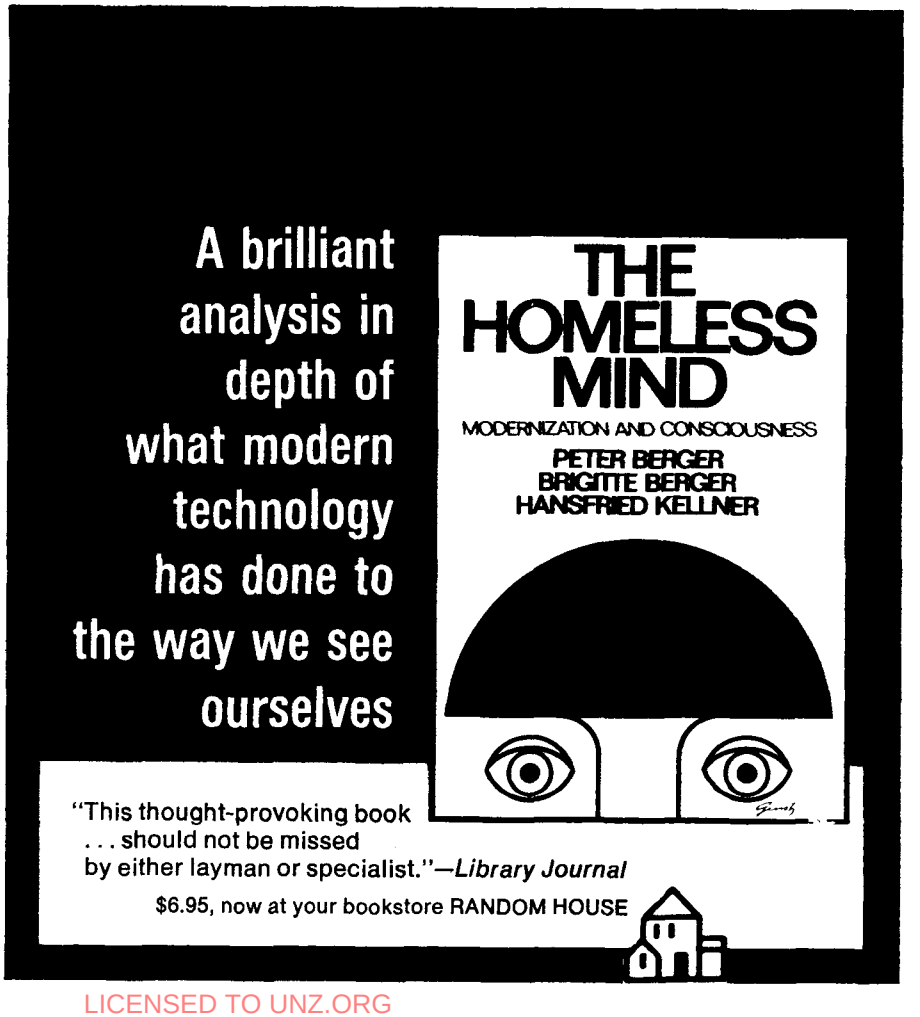
HONECKER AND THE NEW POLITICS OF EUROPE. By HEINZ LIPPMANN. *Macmillan. 272 pp. $7.95.*

*Reviewed by* MYRON RUSH

ERICH HONECKER succeeded Walter Ulbricht on May 3, 1971 as head of the ruling party in East Germany. The event marked the third time in a little over three years that the long-established personal ruler in a Communist state of East Europe was forced from power by political forces that he could not control. These forces were different in each case, but it is noteworthy that the three states involved are the most developed in East Europe.

Czechoslovakia in January 1968 witnessed Antonin Novotny's overthrow as party leader at the climax of a campaign that was unusually

MYRON RUSH, *professor of government at Cornell, is completing a work on political succession in East Europe.*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open, though still waged within the confines of the Central Committee. In Poland three years later, violent demonstrations by the workers in port cities discredited Wladyslaw Gomulka's fifteen-year-old rule and enabled a handful of men in the Politburo to oust their authoritarian boss. The circumstances of succession in East Germany are less certain, but there seems no question that the seventy-eight-year-old Ulbricht was suddenly ousted by a coup that brought to power the long-established heir-presumptive, Erich Honecker.

What manner of man is Ulbricht's successor? Heinz Lippmann's account of Erich Honecker's life is a timely and balanced effort to answer the question. It has the usual bare bones that we have become accustomed to in biographies of Communist leaders, who generally treat their own personal lives and true political characters as state secrets. However, Lippmann has also been able to flesh out his portrait a bit since he worked as Honecker's deputy in the East German youth organization from 1951 to 1953 and says he was "very close" to him. Subsequently Lippmann left the Communist movement and became a journalist in West Germany. The personal information and judgments Lippmann provides are welcome, although it can hardly be said that the book abounds in colorful anecdotes or revealing reminiscences. Lippmann may have held something back, but Honecker in any case strikes the reader as fundamentally a political animal. His two brides, it appears, were chosen from the circle of his political subordinates.

Erich Honecker was born into a worker's family, like most of the top Communist leaders in East Europe, contrary to the myth that they derive chiefly from the bourgeoisie. The elder Honecker was a radical miner in the Saar region who early joined the Communist party and put his son to work in the movement. While still in his teens Erich Honecker was sent to Moscow for training as a Communist youth leader. He returned a year later to begin his life-long career as an *apparatchik*, or full-time party official. His job was not a bureaucrat's sinecure, but required him to work in the party's underground after Hitler came to power. Honecker was arrested in Berlin at the end of 1935, and spent the next decade, until the age of thirty-two, in prison. Doubtless this was a crucial experience in the formation of his political character, as it was also in the lives of Josef Tito, Wladyslaw Gomulka, and Matyas Rakosi, although the impact of this experience on individual Communist leaders seems to have varied markedly.

Honecker, in any case, survived his ten-year sentence for treason and, like numerous other imprisoned Communists in Germany and the occupied countries, was able to resume his career as a party official once the Nazis had been defeated. Of the Nazis' two most hated enemies, the Jews were annihilated while the Communists, though suppressed and imprisoned, for the most part survived to share rule, together with comrades returned from exile, in the zone of Germany occupied by the Red Army.

Communists of ability and proven loyalty to the movement were in short supply in postwar Germany, and Honecker was able to defeat his few rivals and become head of the united youth organization, a post he held for the next decade. During these years he showed that he possessed the qualities the office required—a capacity for administration, for speaking to the concerns of East-German youth, for cooperating with, and manipulating, non-Communist leaders, and for maneuver in the ceaseless struggle within the party for personal power. Most important, he early recognized that its dominant figure was Ulbricht, not Wilhelm Pieck, the elderly titular leader of the Socialist Unity party (the SED), and he cultivated Ulbricht's support. Because of his close allegiance to Ulbricht, neither Honecker's blunders, of which several are mentioned by Lippmann, nor the cabals directed against his authoritarian rule did him lasting harm.

THE change produced in Honecker by his successes is revealed by Lippmann in scattered and passing observations. Characterizing him in 1945, Lippmann speaks of Honecker's "manner, which made him seem open and frank and more uncomplicated and straightforward than the unquestionably more intelligent" Paul Verner. Five years later, however, after Honecker entered the Politburo as a candidate member, he displayed an authoritarian tendency and no longer tolerated contradiction in the youth organization's secretariat. As a rising party official in a Stalin-type regime, Honecker made himself master of his own emotions, accepting as his personal model Lenin's characterization of the controlled Bolshevik. On one occasion, when he left the constricting atmosphere of East Germany's higher politics for a brief time to carry out a political task in West Germany, Lippmann was struck by the contrast in his behavior:

> He seemed much more relaxed than at home, spoke with more enthusiasm, and let himself be carried away in the general excitement. . . . On that trip I got to know a different Erich Honecker, who reacted spontaneously, whose temperament ran away with him, and who seemed to enjoy direct confrontations.

Later, as the prospect of a higher career opened before him, Honecker's "sense of reality appeared increasingly disturbed" and his growing closeness to Ulbricht went "to his head." Members of the Politburo, fearing to challenge Ulbricht directly, began instead to concentrate their fire on his protégé, though with little effect because of Ulbricht's absolute authority.

Lippmann may exaggerate somewhat Ulbricht's power in the period of the early 1950's, but his characterization of it is in general accord with Stalin's mode of rule in East Europe, where power in each state was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a single trusted lieutenant. Stalin's death in March 1953 naturally led to some diffusion of this personal power. Walter Ulbricht's position, in particular, became highly vulnerable on June 16, when the mass demonstrations of industrial workers in East Berlin led to attacks on him at a meeting of the Politburo that lasted through the night. When the re-

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volt spread the next morning to other cities and Ulbricht's personal position sharply worsened, Honecker was presented with a fateful personal decision. Lippmann came to summon Honecker for a moment from the Politburo meeting:

> He seemed nervous and was apparently not listening to what I said. When I asked if he were ill, he shook his head and said resignedly: "They're all attacking Walter. He'll probably be defeated. But the worst thing is that I don't know what I should do myself." He sounded weary and depressed; I had never heard him talk like that before. He was in no hurry to go back into the meeting—almost as if he hoped to avoid having to make a decision.

As it turned out, Ulbricht himself succeeded in postponing a decision; the Soviet army shortly intervened against the workers; thereupon the revolt collapsed; and the Russians then decided to retain Ulbricht in order to consolidate the shaken regime. When Lippmann saw Honecker later that day he seemed "relieved and also a little ashamed that he had entertained the idea of leaving his patron in the lurch and going over to the opposition."

This account is a high point in the book, as the event itself is in Honecker's rise to power. Two years later, at the age of forty-three, he was sent a second time to Moscow for schooling, this time to the elite Higher Party School. One of his classmates was Alexander Dubcek. Both men were being groomed for top posts in their respective parties, and at the same time their capacities presumably were being tested by the Soviet leaders. (Evidently the tests were not sufficiently discriminating, at least in Dubcek's case.) Honecker returned to Berlin in late 1956, in time to play a crucial role in helping Ulbricht defeat a new challenge to his power, led this time by Karl Schirdewan, Ulbricht's deputy for party affairs. Honecker replaced Schirdewan in this powerful post, and Ulbricht later indicated that Honecker was the heir-presumptive.

It is not unusual in Communist states for the leader chosen for this role actually to succeed to the top office. With the passage of time, however, if succession does not occur the incumbent may begin to fear that the heir-presumptive is accumulating too much power and growing restive at the delay; to obviate the danger of a coup he may remove the heir-presumptive altogether. (Thus Khrushchev, for example, replaced Frol Kozlov in 1963 with Leonid Brezhnev.) What is remarkable in the present instance is that the shrewd and highly suspicious Ulbricht had sufficient confidence in Honecker (and in his own power) to allow him to remain heir-presumptive for more than a decade. Honecker repaid Ulbricht for his confidence in April 1971, when the two men were attending a Soviet party Congress in Moscow, by successfully conniving with the Russians to replace his patron and benefactor.

The man who succeeded Ulbricht, although he experienced the hazards of the revolutionary underground and spent a decade in Nazi prisons, remains for all that the quintessential *apparatchik*. He received his Communism from his father, not from rebelling against his class or his bosses, and not from reading books. He seems to have slight interest in general ideas; his formal education, apart from primary school, was acquired at the hands of the "vanguard" party in Moscow. His whole life has been spent working in the party, and he has risen to its summit without occupying an important economic or governmental post.

Honecker's political biography, oddly, resembles particularly closely that of Alexander Dubcek. Unlike Dubcek, however, since becoming head of his party Honecker has given neither Moscow nor his fellow *apparatchiks* much cause for concern. There is a lesson here for political analysts who try to draw inferences from the social and career backgrounds of leaders which may be unwarranted in individual cases. Moscow no doubt looked closely at Erich Honecker, and seems this time to have chosen well. The Soviet leaders have good reason to suppose that their interests and the interests of the party apparatus in East Germany are in loyal and capable hands.

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## Visual Aphorist

THE INSPECTOR. By SAUL STEINBERG. *Viking. 220 pp. $10.00.*

*Reviewed by* JOHN HOLLANDER

"THERE is almost no artist alive," wrote E. H. Gombrich almost twenty years ago, "who knows more about the philosophy of representation than this humorist." Saul Steinberg is as far from being merely a humorist today as he was from being a cartoonist then; in the intervening years his art has become increasingly problematic and profound. Moving through parody, pastiche, satire, metamorphosis of conventional graphic modes, his *oeuvre* has developed joyfully and successfully under the pressure of its own demands, remaining, as far as the art world has been concerned, *hors de combat*. By drawing for publication, rather than for the rotting connoisseurship of the picture-buying world, he has managed, like many Renaissance artists in their published prints, to make his most personal statements his most public ones.

*The Inspector* is his sixth book of drawings to be published in this country, and critics, knowing that they have been overtaken by the career of a major artist, have been hard put to define its genres. Daumier has been mentioned as a parallel to Steinberg—a genius of political and moral caricature taking more privately to painting in later life, etc. But the comparison is trivial. Gombrich remains correct about the nature of his profundity, but Steinberg's pictures are not so much jokes or visual epigrams or even pictures about modes of picturing. Like G. C. Lichtenberg, the great 18th-century German about whom Goethe remarked that he never made a joke that didn't uncover a deep philosophical problem, the Rumanian-born, Italian-trained, American-fledged master is an aphorist. He draws pictures and conclusions with the same line.

But the domain of visual aphorism is hard to define. Consider, for example, the new volume's wordscapes. These are pictorial maps of minimal sentences or short lists of related terms. Sometimes the written words will label the terrain (a black crayon sketch of the two cliffs on either side of a gorge, the left-hand one bearing a canvas on an easel, the right, the painter sighting down his extended brush across at it, the easel-side inscribed ASPERA, the painter's ASTRA). More often, the letters will be objects in space, or grouped as elements in architectonic structures (for instance, a pen drawing of ALL EXCEPT YOU: the first word made of three ranks of parading cardboard cut-outs, heading toward the huge, carved megalithic wall of the second word, in the shade on the far side of which lurks the smaller, humane, Henry Moore carvings of the word YOU). Some of these wordscapes, in wash colors and in oils, have recently appeared on *New Yorker* covers. They include paradigmatic confrontations of form and content, such as the words RED, BLUE, YELLOW, and GREEN—the first, colored a dark blue, lies in the plane of cast shadow of the second word, colored red; the third, in green, is inscribed in the vertical leg of the L in BLUE; the yellow GREEN, lying along the blue R of RED, casts a neat orchid shadow. The joke here is about the crudity of imitative form, and about the evasive complexities of what appears to be the simple notion of complementarity.

Steinberg also mythologizes in another picture the auxiliary verbs: I AM is carved out of vertical chunks of earth, grass-topped, and, at one point, flowering; I HAVE is the dreariness of possession strung across that earth—bits of ruined building, wired together, make up all the letters but the A and V, which are bits of patched, impossible laundry hanging sadly on a sagging line between them; finally, I DO is a heavenly manifestation—flying saucers *cum* Ezekiel wheels *cum* fireworks, spinning whorls of color and energy in the sky above the two other phrases, the I angled somewhat and beginning to recede into the background. But the analytic wit of these wordscapes can dissolve into lyrical vision as well. Steinberg has a shore landscape in oils, a very painterly scene with a reach of inlet lying between sandy beach in the foreground and the foliage of a western shore opposite, light and cloud reflected in the water in a vague, bright cone pointing down at the lone, almost silhouetted figure in the foreground who faces left out of the picture, midway between two arrowed road signs, BEFORE and AFTER. It is in the direction of the latter that he faces. The conventional American vision that faces forward into a western tomorrow (the sunset into which the last movie-shot fades), is here redirected in the suspensions of twilight: the before and after are not ahead of or behind the scene, but toward the reader's left and right. It is only for the figure in the picture, the walker of beaches, the artist himself, that the sunset eternally composes its painting.

THESE pictures have evolved their own genre. But this has always been true of Steinberg's major work. In the past, his inventions unambiguously remained extensions of drawing. From the period of the volume called *The Passport* (1955), the line drawings invaded and digested other graphic areas. Simulations of handwriting, document and banknote engraving, written language rendered unintelligible by official stamps and seals (at its simplest, a visual premonition of a Jacques Tati soundtrack), comprised a graphic language open to all the stylistic vernaculars of published picture—steel and photo-engraving, etching, watercolor, photography. The rhetoric of all our fashions of public visual expression became the subject of Steinberg's continuous essay on politics and the visual language. By the late 50's, he was designing his own rubber stamps—at first mock-official, they became figures of people and animals and, most recently, visionary seals containing smudged, unreadable landscapes and heraldic figures. In the late 60's, when Steinberg first started to paint lyrical landscapes in oil, his scenes of Long Island sand, water, and sky would be given needed scale not by a painted human figure, but

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by a rubber-stamped one. This completed an ironic cycle, humanizing a scene (for as Blake's demonic proverb goes, "Where man is not, Nature is barren"), putting a stamp of visionary approval on it, by means of the otherwise brutal, bureaucratic device.

The evolution of both his visual language and his artistic purpose continued in other ways. Drawn, simulated photographs in the 50's and early 60's gave way to collages of photo and line drawing, and, finally, in *Le Masque* (1966), to collages in reverse, so to speak, photographs of people wearing paper-bag heads, painted by the artist and having the same kind of grim relevance to the clothed bodies and the *mise en scène* which they dominated as those that linked the groups of pictorial elements done in varying graphic styles in previous volumes. His visual punning, too, began to extend beyond the kinds of play on gross form—where the drawn line, itself a Chaplinesque satirist of similitude, would yoke by reductive violence together the unlike things, to the detriment of both and of the whole visual world we share with them. The puns come to operate on styles of representing form, rather than form alone, and a characteristic Steinbergian sense of the world made itself manifest. By the late 50's, one saw his hand and eye everywhere: Vladimir Nabokov's observation about the smile on the back of an unopened envelope that you know contains a check is early Steinberg of the formal punning. But this, from a short story by Edith Wharton, is of a later period: "She lived, not far from Irvington, in a damp Gothic villa overhung by Norway spruces and looking exactly like a memorial emblem done in hair." For Steinberg, every architectonic arrangement, every structure, is a facade, every human visage a false face.

In his most recent exhibition, Steinberg further extended his realm of the drawn. He showed a series of wooden work-table tops, with pencils, pens, brushes, boxes of this and that, all carved from pine or balsa. At one level, an aphorism was directed at *trompe l'oeil* representation: the sculpted pencils and brushes were neither real nor made to look real, but were painstakingly accurate versions, in the round, of Steinberg drawings of pencils and brushes. They looked, in short, as if you could reach out and not touch them. The tables were three-dimensional drawings. At another level, they carried an allegory of art history, in thumbing their wooden nose at the simplistic pretensions of pop art. (The next step beyond these, inevitably, is to add to the table tops finished or half-completed pictures, and oils, simulated Old Master Drawings—themselves done in oil on canvas—old photographs, etc.: all appear in those he is preparing for a show in Paris this fall.)

This newest volume contains genre scenes, parades, wordscapes, painted landscapes populated by rubber stamps (my favorite has six occurrences of the couple from Millet's *L'Angelus* and nearly twenty of a painter with an easel painting them), photo-collages, etc. New, fierce forms, derived from primitive cartoon-strip, begin to emerge, and an obsession with the rhetorical effect of the Gizeh pyramids in their reduced, Masonic form (as on the U.S. one-dollar bill). In between its plangent and melancholy jacket paintings, Steinberg, The Inspector of civilization and its discontented inscriptions —on paper, in the ground, against the sky—continues his steady work. But the use of oil painting is a new and serious matter. (I do not mean color in the drawings—there has always been that, and in *Le Masque,* in particular, there was a good deal, including adaptations of such non-colors as the official red-and-blue of airmail envelopes.) In the new work, paintings have become parts of the drawings the way writing, stamps, and photos had earlier. Steinberg had treated the relation of painting to drawing—drawing for reproduction, always—as that of the private to the public worlds. Of his own paintings in the past five years or so, he has remarked that whereas most painters learn to paint early and

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only gradually may possibly become artists, he had spent years becoming an artist, and now could afford to learn to paint. This is not merely an allusion to the almost apocalyptic painterliness of the abstract expressionist decades in America, but to a realization of the power of his own art to work its metamorphic magic even on its own most precious and most privileged glimpses. The visionary pastoral country beyond Steinberg's drawn urban world can only be read, after all, through those shining and wise spectacles.

## A Radical Life

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH: A BIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT. By JERVIS ANDERSON. *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 398 pp. $12.50.*

*Reviewed by* JAMES Q. WILSON

A. PHILIP RANDOLPH, who Murray Kempton once suggested may be "the greatest man who has lived in the U.S. in this century," arrived in Harlem from Jacksonville, Florida, in 1911, within a year of the time of the founding of the NAACP, and he lived there for almost sixty years until he moved to an ILGWU housing project on lower Ninth Avenue. His life thus has spanned virtually the entire 20th-century history of Negro protest and civil-rights activism, and though he was not deeply involved in many phases of it—he played almost no role in the NAACP, in CORE, or in SNCC—he was nonetheless during much of this time the best-known black leader in the country, and in later years the most widely-respected one. This remarkable man, aloof not only in manner but in his relations with the (now) better-known civil-rights organizations, acquired extraordinary stature by virtue of forces which he helped create: the radical *Messenger* magazine, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and two marches on Washington, one in 1941 which he only threatened and another in 1963 which (with the aid of Bayard Rustin) he carried out. He is one of only three blacks—the others were Marcus Garvey and Martin Luther King, Jr.—about whom it can be said that they created, however briefly, genuine political mass movements among Negro Americans.

The biographical portrait by Jervis Anderson, a black writer, provides a fascinating but incomplete glimpse of Randolph. Though the book draws on original sources, it is not a full, scholarly biography; though it deals with its subject from birth to the present, nearly four-fifths of the pages concern events prior to 1945; though Randolph appears on virtually every page, he remains an elusive figure, in part, perhaps, because he is an elusive personality—reserved, distant, correct. Anderson brings narrative skill and personal concern to his writing, and the result is a lucid, warm, and informative account. Yet Randolph himself remains a puzzle, or more precisely, the larger significance of Randolph's life in the times through which he passed is obscure. He was important, feared, respected, and often effective; but is there a lesson to be learned from his life, one that illuminates a general condition?

There may be one: the fate of black radicalism in America. Randolph for much of his life was an outspoken, relentless, and controversial critic of the fundamental institutions of American society. In his early years, he was to the left of W. E. B. Du Bois in that he argued not only against Booker T. Washington, and thus against the acceptance of black social inferiority, but as well against capitalism and thus against the acceptance of the economic status of workers, black and white. Throughout most of his life, Randolph has been an ardent socialist. Though today such an affiliation is both safe and somewhat conventional, in the 1920's it was dangerous and eccentric.

Through his editorship of the *Messenger*, a radical Harlem magazine, and his frequent soapbox oratory at the corner of Lenox Avenue and 135th Street, Randolph became a leading figure in a group of young black radicals, most, unlike him, of West Indian ancestry, and all, like him, distrusted by established black leaders and harassed by Justice Department officials who found the magazine to be "by long odds the most dangerous of all the Negro publications." Indeed, in 1918 Randolph and his co-editor, Chandler Owen, were arrested for having allegedly violated the Espionage Act by virtue of their resistance to American entry into World War I. (The charges were never pressed.)

By 1969, Randolph was being accused by certain young black militants of being an Uncle Tom because he was critical of urban rioting and of the "black power" slogan and because he had supported Israel and the striking white teachers in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school dispute.

Randolph did not change his views on fundamentals. From first to last, he rejected black separatism whether preached by Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, or Stokely Carmichael, he remained a convinced socialist and committed trade unionist, and he never ceased pressing or in any way moderated his insistence on civil rights. The Uncle Tom charge, a foolish slander, is no doubt incomprehensible to a man for whom neither age nor success had produced an abandonment of youthful principles.

YET there is a sense in which Randolph's role, if not his views, ceased being radical. When radical rhetoric was his only weapon, Randolph failed utterly. The *Messenger* had little mass influence: the blacks of Harlem in those years voted steadily for the Republican ticket, the black middle classes remained staunchly anti-union, and support for the magazine came primarily from white liberals and radicals. When Garvey appeared on the scene, millions of blacks followed him in his dreams of an African empire, a handful followed Randolph in his appeal for class consciousness and worker organization. By 1925, Randolph's "career," if his pamphleteering can be called that, seemed over. The two governing principles of his political philosophy—civil rights for blacks and economic power for workers—seemed hope-

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lessly in conflict. The AFL, a viable union, was in this period and in most of its parts anti-Negro and anti-radical while the IWW, a radical industrial union with no color bar, was short-lived and unsuccessful.

It was a dilemma that many black radicals faced. In the 1930's, young Negro intellectuals such as Ralph Bunche and Abram Harris criticized the legal and political strategy of the NAACP and proposed that it shift to an economic-development and class-organization strategy instead, but no one knew how to make the new approach work. Fighting legal battles against lynching and restrictive covenants was a way both to make visible progress and to raise resources; "economic education" and development was only a phrase. "Working-class solidarity" was an interesting idea, but most of the white workers did not want solidarity with blacks, while those white unions that accepted it, such as the CIO unions, were so much stronger than any group of black leaders that they could dominate any partnership. Nor were these mere theoretical difficulties: the National Negro Congress, created in 1936 to carry out the ideas of Bunche, Harris, and Randolph, was in short order taken over, first by the big industrial unions and then by the Communists. Randolph accepted the presidency of the NNC, believing it to be a broad alliance of black organizations and integrated unions, but by 1940 he felt he had to warn the NNC against becoming what in fact it already was: a front organization of the Communist party that was then insisting, in the aftermath of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, that the United States stay out of the European war. His criticisms of the Soviet Union became, in effect, his speech of resignation.

One decisive event changed Randolph's life, saved him from obscurity, and placed him on the road to a commanding position in the civil-rights movement: his agreement to lead and help organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. He was not a porter, but far from being a disqualification that was an asset: not being employed by the Pullman Company, he could not be fired by the Pullman Company for union organizing. While his views did not change, from that time on he became something more than a rhetorical radical: he became a man with responsibility for the welfare of others, with an organization to create and maintain, and a black constituency to serve. A Socialist became the head of an organization of Republican voters.

THE most moving and revealing parts of Jervis Anderson's book are the accounts of Randolph's struggle, aided by others but against apparently insuperable odds, to obtain recognition of the BSCP from Pullman. The fact that he achieved his goal only with the aid of New Deal labor legislation —a New Deal he had strongly criticized because it meliorated the profit system but did not abolish it—is ironic, but it does not detract from the magnitude of his own accomplishments. Along the way, the BSCP became an affiliate of the AFL, another irony inasmuch as Randolph had earlier excoriated the AFL as racist and called for its dissolution. And when the CIO was expelled from the AFL in 1938, Randolph and the BSCP remained in the AFL despite his earlier demand for industrial unionism.

Ironies aplenty, but no compromises: from first to last, Randolph maintained his view that a Negro-labor alliance was imperative and that the sins of organized labor were best changed from inside the movement. Persistently and relentlessly, Randolph demanded an end to racially exclusionary practices in labor. Union leaders criticized him, ignored him, fought with him, but they did not silence him, and in the end they agreed with him. Meanwhile, Randolph's erstwhile pamphleteer friends had dropped from view, embittered by failure or ensnared by Stalinists. Nothing is heard and little is known of them now; their legacies are memories and the back copies of a magazine.


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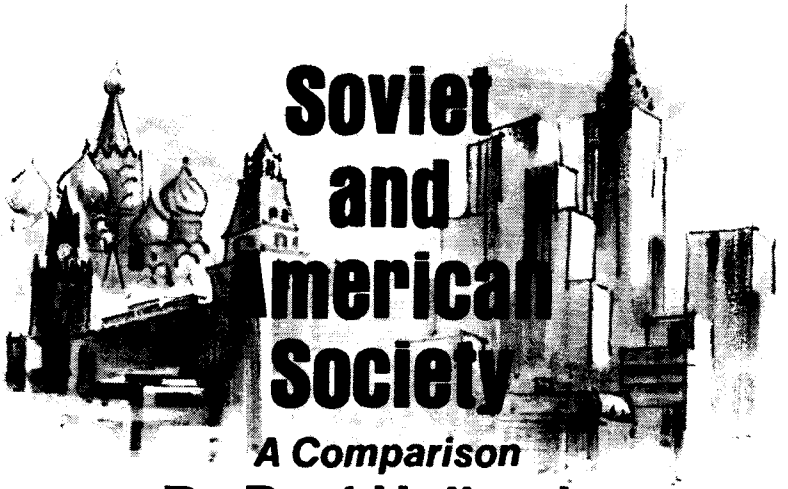


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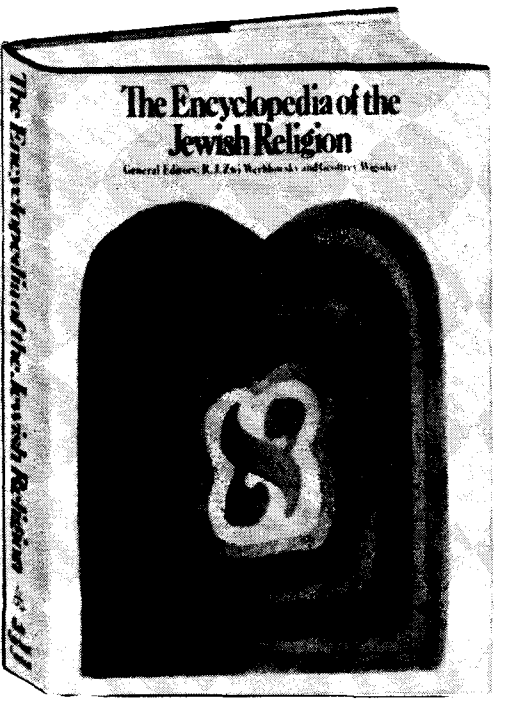


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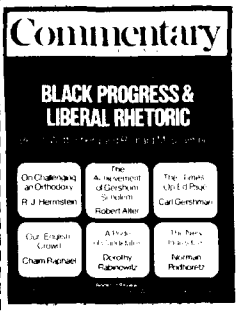


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